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DISRAELI



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Kenneth Macleay

The Young Disraeli.

DISRAELI

A STUDY IN
PERSONALITY AND IDEAS

BY

WALTER SICHEL

AUTHOR OF "BOLINGBROKE AND HIS TIMES"

WITH THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

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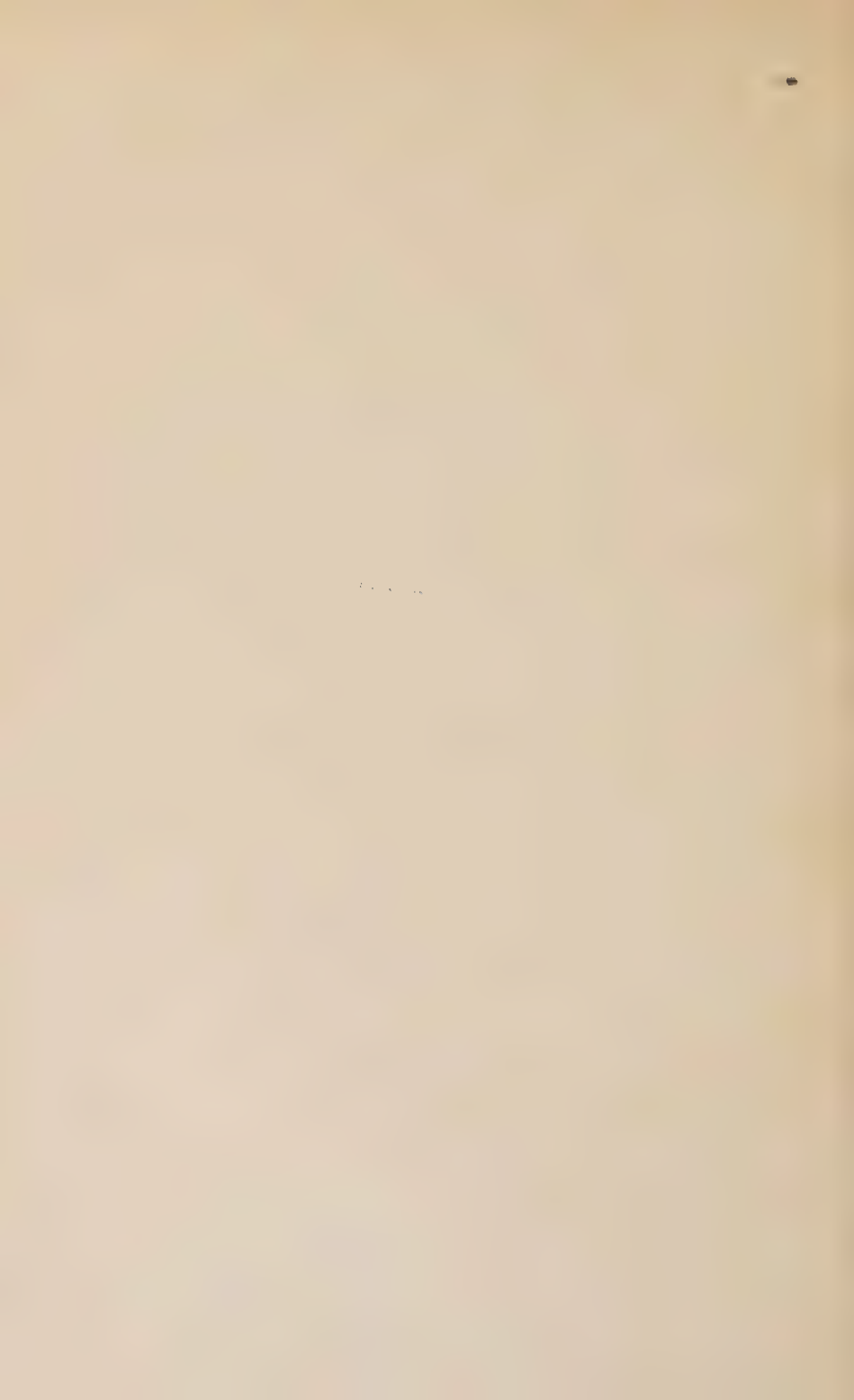
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"TIME IS REPRESENTED WITH A SCYTHE AS WELL AS WITH AN HOUR-GLASS. WITH THE ONE HE MOWS DOWN, WITH THE OTHER HE RECONSTRUCTS."—DISRAELI, in *The Press*, 1853.

"GREAT MINDS MUST TRUST TO GREAT TRUTHS AND GREAT TALENTS FOR THEIR RISE, AND NOTHING ELSE."

"TRUE WISDOM LIES IN THE POLICY THAT WOULD EFFECT ITS AIMS BY THE INFLUENCE OF OPINION, AND YET BY THE MEANS OF EXISTING FORMS."

"... THE PAST IS ONE OF THE ELEMENTS OF OUR POWER."—*Speech on Mr. Cobden's death, April 3, 1865.*

DISRAELI

INTRODUCTION

ON THE IMAGINATIVE QUALITY

THE power of imagination is essential to supreme statesmanship. Indeed, no really originaive genius in any domain of the mind can succeed without it. In literature it reigns paramount. Of art it is the soul. Without it the historian is a mere registrar of sequence, and no interpreter of characters. In science it decides the end towards which the daring of a Verulam, a Newton, a Herschel, a Darwin, can travel. On the battle-field, in both elements, it enabled Marlborough, Nelson, and Napoleon to revolutionise tactics. In the law its influence is perhaps less evident ; but even here a masterful insight into the spirit of precedent marks the creative judge. By lasting imagination, far more than by the colder weapon of shifting reason, the world is governed. "Even Mormon," wrote Disraeli, "counts more votaries than Bentham." For imagination is a vivid, intellectual, half-spiritual sympathy, which diverts the flood of human passion into fresh channels to fertilise the soil ; just as fancy again is the play of intellectual emotion. Whereas reason, the measure of which varies from age to age, can only at best dam or curb the deluge for a time. Reason educates and criticises, but Imagination inspires and creates. The magnetic force which is felt is really the spell of personal influence and the key of public opinion. It solves problems by visualising them, and kindles enthusiasm from its own fascinating fires. And more : Imagination is in the truest

sense prophetic. Could one only grasp with a perfect view the myriad provinces of suffering, enterprise, and aspiration with which the Leader is called upon to grapple, not only would the expedients to meet them suggest themselves as by a divine flash, but their inevitable relations and meanings would start into vision. For what the herd call the Present, is only the *literal* fact, the shell, of environment. Its *spirit* is the Future; and the highest imagination in seeing it foresees. Imagination, once more, is the mainspring of spontaneity. Its vigour enables the will to beget circumstance, instead of being the creature of surroundings; "for Imagination ever precedeth voluntary motion," says Bacon. It empowers the will of one to sway and mould the wills of many. And it is the very source of that capacity for idealism which alone distinguishes man from the brute. Viewing in 1870 the general purport of his message, Disraeli wrote with truth that it ". . . ran counter to the views which had long been prevalent in England, and which may be popularly, though not altogether accurately, described as utilitarian;" that it "recognised imagination in the government of nations as a quality not less important than reason;" that it "trusted to a popular sentiment which rested on an heroic tradition, and was sustained by the high spirit of a free aristocracy;" that its "economical principles were not unsound," but that it "looked upon the health and knowledge of the multitude as not the least precious part of the wealth of nations;" that "in asserting the doctrine of race," it "was entirely opposed to the equality of man, and similar abstract dogmas, which have destroyed ancient society without creating a satisfactory substitute;" that "resting on popular sympathies and popular privileges," it "held that no society could be durable unless it was built upon the principles of loyalty and religious reverence."

How comes it, then, that, in the art of governing a free people, this imaginative fellowship with unseen ideas, this power which men call Genius, "to make the passing shadow serve thy will," is so constantly suspected and mistrusted; that *uncommon* sense, until it triumphs, is a stone of stumbling to the common sense of the average man? That Cromwell was called a self-seeking maniac for his vision of

Theocracy ; William of Orange, a cold-blooded monster for his quest after union and empire ; Bolingbroke, a charlatan for his fight against class-preponderance, and on behalf of united nationality ; Chatham, an actor for his dramatic disdain of shams ; Canning, by turns a charlatan and buffoon, for preferring the traditions of a popular crown to the innovations of a crowned democracy, and at the same time seeking to break the charmed circle of a patrician syndicate ; that Burke was hounded out by jealous oligarchs for refusing to confound the "nation" with the "people," and cosmopolitan opinions with national principles ? The main answer is simple. What is above the moment is feared by it, and malice is the armour of fear : "It is the abject property of most that being parcel of the common mass, and destitute of means to raise themselves, they sink and settle lower than they need. They know not what it is to feel within a comprehensive faculty that grasps great purposes with ease, that turns and wields almost without an effort plans too vast for their conception, which they cannot move ;" and there are always the jealous who—

" . . . If they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so small,
Inflate themselves with some insane delight,
And judge all Nature from her feet of clay."

There are the puzzled whom novelty bewilders, and there are the cautious who suspect it. And there is the wholesome instinct of the plain majority to pin itself to immediate "measures" without recognising that a "principle" may change expedients for bringing its idea into effect. Again, there are many—especially in England—who, in their genuine scorn of pinchbeck, mistake the great for the grandiose, and certain that nothing which glitters can be gold, invest imaginative brilliance with the tinsel spangles of Harlequin. There are, too, the second-rate and the second-hand, whose life is one long quotation, and who doubt every coin unissued from the nearest mint ; and there is, moreover, a sort of stolid crassness readily dignified into sterling solidity. All this is natural. Institutions and traditions

themselves have been aliens until naturalised in and by the community. Imagination gave them birth, national needs accept them ; and the contemporary sneer is often succeeded by the posthumous statue.

Perhaps the most curious feature of the prosaic and imperceptive man is his ready confusion of the dramatic with the theatrical, of attitude with posture, of pointed effects for a big purpose with affectations for a small. Flirtation might just as well be confounded with love, or foppery with breeding. And yet these same unimaginative censors have often contradicted their protests by their actions, and squandered great opportunities by futile strokes of the theatre.

So early as 1837, Sheil, who from the first admired the young Disraeli (then Bulwer's intimate and the meteor of three seasons), whom Disraeli praised in one of his earliest election speeches, and who was surely no mean judge of intellectual eloquence, warned him after his *début* that "the House will not allow a man to be a wit and an orator, unless they have the credit of finding it out. . . . You have shown the House that you have a fine organ, that you have an unlimited command of language, that you have courage, temper, and readiness. Now get rid of your genius for a session ; speak often, for you must not show yourself cowed, but speak shortly. Be very quiet, try to be dull, only argue and reason imperfectly, for if you reason with precision, they will think you are trying to be witty. Astonish them by speaking on subjects of detail. Quote figures, dates, calculations, and in a short time the House will sigh for the wit and eloquence which they all know are in you ; they will encourage you to pour them forth, and then you will have the ear of the House, and be a favourite." Seventeen years afterwards, when the dashing *littérateur* had become Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons, Mr. Walpole thus defended him against his enemies on the Budget. ". . . Whence is it that these extraordinary attacks are made against my right honourable friend ? What is the reason, what is the cause, that he is to be assailed at every point, when he has made two financial statements in one year, which have both met with the approbation of this

House, and I believe also with the approbation of the country? Is it because he has laboured hard and long, contending with genius against rank and power and the ablest statesmen, until he has attained the highest eminence which an honourable ambition may ever aspire to—the leadership and guidance of the Commons of England? Is it because he has verified in himself the dignified description of a great philosophical poet of antiquity, portraying equally his past career and his present position—

‘*Certare ingenio ; contendere nobilitate ;
Noctes atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri*’?”

Yes! This is the sort of barrier piled in the path of the brilliant by the “practical” man—the man who practises the blunders of his predecessors,” the “prophet of the past.” Still greater, because deeper laid, are the obstacles which confront him when he has mastered the drudgery of office and the strategy of debate ; when, from the vantage-ground of political pre-eminence and public approval, he dares to look over the heads of his compeers and prepare strong foundations for the future of his country. Then that becomes true which Bolingbroke has so splendidly expressed : “The ocean which environs us is an emblem of our government, and the pilot and the minister are in similar circumstances. It seldom happens that either of them can steer a direct course, and they both arrive at their port by means which frequently seem to carry them from it. But as the work advances, the conduct of him who leads it on with real abilities clears up, the appearing inconsistencies are reconciled, and when it is once consummated, the whole shows itself so uniform, so plain, and so natural, that every dabbler in politics will be apt to think that he could have done the same.”

It is this that Disraeli effected by reverting to fundamental elements and substituting the generous, inclusive, and “national” Toryism of Bolingbroke, Wyndham, and Pitt, for the perverted Toryism of Eldon ; the “party without principles,” the “Tory men and Whig measures,” the “organised hypocrisy” that followed on the “Tamworth Manifesto ;” the Conservatism that “preserved” institutions as men “preserve”

game, only to kill them ; and the outworn Whiggism that excluded all but a few governing families from power ; and, after its great achievement of religious liberty, exploited the extension of civil privileges as the mere muniment of its own title. He ended the confederacies and revived the creed.¹ He repudiated the system under which "the Crown had become a cipher, the Church a sect, the nobility drones, and the people drudges." "... But we forget," he urges in *Sybil*, "Sir Robert Peel is not the leader of the Tory party—the party that resisted the ruinous mystification that metamorphosed direct taxation by the Crown into indirect taxation by the Commons ; that denounced the system which mortgaged industry to protect property ;² the party that ruled Ireland by a scheme which reconciled both Churches, and by a series of parliaments which counted among them lords and commons of both religions ; that has maintained at all times the territorial constitution of England as the only basis and security for local government, and which nevertheless once laid on the table of the House of Commons a commercial tariff negotiated at Utrecht, which is the most rational that was ever devised by statesmen ; a party that has prevented the Church from being the salaried agent of the State, and has supported the parochial polity of the country which secures to every labourer a home. In a parliamentary sense that great party has ceased to exist ; but I will believe that it still lives in the thought and sentiment . . . of the English nation. It has its origin in great principles and noble instincts ; it sympathises with the lowly, it looks up to the Most High ; it can count its heroes and its martyrs. . . . Even now, . . . in an age of political materialism, of confused purposes and perplexed intelligence, that aspires only to wealth because it has faith in no other accomplishment ;³ as men rifle cargoes

¹ "... These are concessionary, not Conservative principles. This party treats institutions as we do our pheasants, they preserve only to destroy them."

² Swift, advertng to National Debt.

³ Cardinal Newman afterwards inveighed against the same union of faithlessness and Mammon in one of his finest sermons. Disraeli constantly dwelt on the dangers that liberty might suffer, if a democracy unreconciled to monarchy and its institutions became a class instead of an

on the verge of shipwreck, Toryism will yet rise from the tomb . . . *to bring back strength to the Crown, liberty to the subject, and to announce that power has only one duty—to secure the social welfare of the people.*"

And, again, this from the close of *Coningsby*: ". . . he looked upon a government without distinct principles of policy as only a stop-gap to a widespread and demoralising anarchy; . . . he for one could not comprehend how a free government could endure without national opinions to uphold it. . . . As for Conservative government, the natural question was, 'What do you mean to conserve? . . . Things or only names, realities or merely appearances? Do you mean to continue the system commenced in 1834, and with a hypocritical reverence for the principles and a superstitious adherence to the forms of the old *exclusive* constitution, carry on your policy by latitudinarian practice?'"

His lifelong purpose as a statesman was to refresh institutions with reality, and to show by practice, as well as by precept, that, in all classes, an aristocracy without inherent superiority is doomed. De Tocqueville, in his famous treatise on "The Old Régime and the Revolution," does the same.

Eighteenth-century Toryism, a smitten cause espousing popular privileges, taught that unless the Crown ruled for the people as well as reigned over them, unless the nobles led them independently to high issues, unless the people themselves recognised that they were the privileged order in a nation, and that their representatives should form "a senate supported by the sympathy of millions," the traditional principles of England had dwindled into a sham.

"No one," says Disraeli in *Coningsby*, again adverting to the critical issues of 1834, "had arisen either in Parliament, the Universities, or the Press, to lead the public mind to the investigation of principles; and not to mistake in their reformations the corruption of practice for fundamental ideas. It was this perplexed, ill-informed, jaded, shallow generation,

element, and was brought into collision with the "three per cents." The despotisms of bare democracy and of aggravated plutocracy were equally distasteful to him, and he feared their union. Cf. many striking passages in *The Press*, 1853-59.

repeating cries which they did not comprehend, and wearied with the endless ebullitions of their own barren conceit, that Sir Robert Peel was summoned to govern. It was from such materials, ample in quantity, but in all spiritual qualities most deficient; with great numbers, largely aced, consoled up to their chins, but without knowledge, genius, thought, truth, or faith, that Sir Robert Peel was to form 'a great Conservative party on a comprehensive basis. . . .'" Even Sir Robert's single-mindedness and supremacy over Parliament failed to secure strength of Government. By universal consent, including his own avowal, he wrecked a great party in a country where great parties form the main pledge for the due representation of political opinion, and under a system where they remain the chief preventive against public corruption.

The first two Georges had reigned over the towns, but not over the country. After the Reform Bill it seemed as though the great cities themselves would swamp the land. How was Sir Robert to save the situation in 1834? Speaking with respect for Sir Robert, but with contempt for his "Tamworth Manifesto," Disraeli, in his discussion of that famous document, repeats his message once more: ". . . There was indeed considerable shouting about what they called Conservative principles; but the awkward question naturally arose, 'What will you conserve?' The prerogatives of a Crown, provided they are not exercised; the independence of the House of Lords, provided it is not asserted; the ecclesiastical estate, provided it is regulated by a commission of laymen. Everything, in short, that is established, as long as it is a phrase and not a fact."¹

It is thus that the man of ideas is, in the long run, eminently practical; and it is thus, too, that in the realm of art ideas are the surest realities. But here also the immediate appeal constantly falls to the lot of what is called "realism," and few feel what they cannot touch until the popular voice tells them that it is "real." "Madame," says Heine in his "Buch Legrand," "have you the ghost of an idea what an idea is? 'I have put my best ideas into this coat,' says

¹ With this passage should be compared the striking remarks on p. 222 of *The Political Biography of Lord George Bentinck*.

my tailor. My washerwoman says the parson has filled her daughter's head with ideas, and unfitted her for anything sensible; and coachman Pattensen mumbles on every occasion, 'That is an idea.' But yesterday, when I inquired what he meant, he snarled out, 'An idea is just an idea; it is any silly stuff that comes into one's head.' "

No memorial of Disraeli's magical career can be adequate without access to the papers confided to the late Lord Rowton, as well as to much private and unpublished correspondence. It is no slur on the "Lives" that have already appeared to say that they lack the materials for a complete picture. The best of these beyond question is Mr. Froude's; but not only is it tinged with considerable prejudice, but it is very faulty in its facts; and, moreover, in common with Mr. Bryce's cursory essay and Herr Brandes's minuter study, it has perhaps fallen into the error of misreading Disraeli's mature character and career from isolated and indiscriminate use of such sidelights as they are pleased to discover in his earliest novels. To trace Disraeli's development, it is necessary to follow the long and continuous thread of his words and actions, to consider the changes experienced during the fifty years of his political outlook in England and in Europe, and to ascertain how many of these tendencies were foreseen, produced, or modified by him. The criticisms current are either those of men (often partisans) who lack this length of view, and interpret the latter manifestations of Disraeli's genius, with which alone they are even outwardly acquainted, in the light of preconceived notions, or the few circulated comparatively early in his career, before its eventual drift was revealed, and while the full blaze of hostile bitterness was raging. There exists, it is true, a most able, a most appreciative, a most detailed account of his political career, compiled by Mr. Ewald shortly after Lord Beaconsfield's death, but this is mainly a long parliamentary chronicle. Mr. Kebbel's enlightening edition of selected speeches is illustrative though limited. To both of these, among many other sources, direct and indirect, I here gratefully acknowledge my obligation.

A real biography, therefore, is at present impossible. Disraeli's acknowledged debt to his darling sister and devoted

wife ("Women," he has said, "are the priestesses of predestination"); his correspondence and commerce with many eminent men, including both Louis Philippe and Napoleon III.; his letters to our late Queen; his notes of policy; the rough drafts for compositions, both literary and parliamentary; his State papers and official memoranda; his relations to many men of letters and leading; such known, though unpublished, correspondence as even that with Mrs. Williams; the glimpses of him as a youth through Mrs. Austin, Bulwer, Lord Strangford, the Sheridans, with many others; in his age, through a privileged circle of distinguished and devoted associates—all these, and many more, must be pressed into service if even the rudiments are to be portrayed. And none of these are yet available.

I have therefore thought that, pending such an enterprise, some account, however imperfect, of the ideas that governed him throughout—a slight biography, as it were, of his mind—might prove acceptable. It will endeavour to depict the spirit of his attitude to the world in which he moved and for which he worked. It will aim at representing the temperature of his opinions immanent alike in his writings and speeches. His utterance was never bounded by the mere occasion, and light and guidance may be found in it for the problems of to-day. In most that he wrote or said, a certain swell of soul, a sweep and stretch of mind are strikingly manifest.

"How very seldom," he has written, "do you encounter in the world a man of great abilities, acquirements, experience, who will unmask his mind, *unbutton his brains*, and pour forth in careless and picturesque phrase all the results of his studies and observations, his knowledge of men, books, and nature!"

Such a contribution is anyhow feasible, and is fraught with more than even the glamour linked with the person by whom these ideas were clothed in words and deeds. For principles are applied ideas; habits are applied principles. Disraeli's ideas have, to some extent, become ruling principles, several of them are at this moment national habits; while some of them, unachieved during his lifetime, seem in process of accomplishment. Disraeli was a poet—one of those "unacknowledged legislators of the world" described by "Herbert"

in *Venetia*; but his imaginative fancy was allied to a very strong character. It is a rare combination. To Bolingbroke's youthful genius he united that force of will and purpose for which Bolingbroke had long to wait, and which, perhaps, he never fully attained. This analogy was pressed on Disraeli on the threshold of his career by a distinguished friend.

Above all things Disraeli was a personality. Personality is independent of training, except in the rare cases where education accords with predisposition. It is the will. And in authorship, when expression chimes with intention, it is the style. Personality is the clue to history, for events proceed from character, more than character from events. Commenting on the adoption of the "Charter" by non-chartists groaning under the injustice of industrial slavery, Disraeli observes most truly: ". . . But all this had been brought about, as most of the great events of history, by the unexpected and unobserved influence of individual character." Personality is the salt of politics; it is the spirit of our party system; and woe betide every era in England when figure-heads replace head-figures. It is an atmosphere enchanting the landscape. ". . . It is the personal that interests mankind, that fires their imagination and wins their hearts. A cause is a great abstraction, and fit only for students: embodied in a party, it stirs men to action; but place at the head of that party a leader who can inspire enthusiasm, he commands the world. . . ." Association, groups, co-operative principles, these are the mechanisms invented by the brain, and guided by the hand of individuality, the fuel that individuality gathers and enkindles. Without it they remain dead lumber, and can never of themselves prove originaive forces. What men crave is, once more in Disraeli's parlance, ". . . A primordial and creative mind; one that will say to his fellows, 'Behold, God has given me thought, I have discovered truth, and you *shall* believe.'" Personality is the contradiction of the mechanical and of the dead level; it is the soul of influence. How depressing is the reverse side of the medal!—"Duncan Macmorrogh" (the utilitarian in *The Young Duke*), "cut up the Creation and got a name. His attack upon mountains was most violent, and proved, by its personality

that he had come from the lowlands. He demonstrated the inability of all elevation, and declared that the Andes were the aristocracy of the globe. Rivers he rather patronised, but flowers he quite pulled to pieces, and proved them to be the most useless of existences. . . . He informed us that we were quite wrong in supposing ourselves to be the miracle of the Creation. On the contrary, he avowed that already there were various pieces of machinery of far more importance than man ; and he had no doubt in time that a superior race would arise, got by a steam-engine on a spinning-jenny. . . .”

To impress his ideas through his will on his generation, was Disraeli's ruling purpose from the first ; but to attain the position which would entitle him to do so he never regarded as more than a ladder towards his main ambition. Ambition¹ spurred him from the first. But, as the present Duke of Devonshire generously owned in the heat of party contest, Disraeli was never prompted by mean or unworthy motives ; and—added the speaker—it would be the merest cant to pretend that honourable and honest ambition is not a main incitement to public life. At the outset he was convinced of a mission, and the visions over which he had long brooded in silent solitude became realised in the world of action. Both reverie and energy alternated even in his boyish being. “ I fully believed myself the object of an omnipotent Destiny over which I had no control”—and yet “ Destiny bears us to our lot, and Destiny is perhaps our own will.” “. . . There arose in my mind a desire to create things beautiful as that golden star ;” and yet “. . . Nor could I conceive that anything could tempt me from my solitude . . . but the strong conviction that the fortunes of my race depended on my effort, or that I could materially forward that great amelioration, . . . in the practicability of which I devoutly believe.” As a boy he dreamed of “ shaking thrones and founding empires ;” and yet, he felt that he must not

¹ “ It was that noble ambition, the highest and the best, that must be born in the heart and organised in the brain, which will not let a man be content unless his intellectual power is recognised by his race, and desires that it should contribute to their welfare.” Thus he speaks of *Coningsby*, the castle of whose fathers is not to be one “ of Indolence.”

"pass" his "days like a ghost gliding in a vision." These are among the echoes and glimpses afforded by his earliest fiction of his earliest self, and to this topic I shall recur in my last chapter. I mention them here for a material reason. In treating his thoughts we must distinguish between those notions which merely concern success or career, and those ideas which assured victory was to achieve. Nor should we omit the very vital distinction between personality and egotism, for confusion in this regard constantly obscures our estimates. Individuality with the forces that make for it is not "individualism ;" yet the two are often confused.

The essential egotist is a sort of buccaneer. He roams the seas to rifle cargoes, and his conquests are the spoils of a freebooter. He seeks to exploit society for his own benefit—to burn down his neighbour's roof-tree that he may boil his egg. He gives nothing that he can keep, and takes all he can grasp by whatever methods may advantage him. He leaves the world poorer when he goes, and as he leaves it, he wishes it. In Cowper's words—

"Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety that prompts
His every action, and imbrutes the man."

The man, on the other hand, of overwhelming personality, aspires honourably to power, the very condition of which in his eyes is to guide and elevate the country which entrusts him with it. The responsibility of privilege, great position on the tenure of great duties, ambition not as a right but as the sole means of enforcing his ideals—these are his characteristics. He never covets place without power, and never power without influence ; whereas some kind of covetousness is essential to the egotist. "He who has great honours," Disraeli has urged, "must have great burdens." And again : ". . . My conception," he said, in a signal speech during 1846, "of a great statesman is of one who represents a great idea ; an idea which he may and can impress on the mind and conscience of a nation. . . . That is a grand, that is indeed an heroic position. But I care not what may be the position of a man who never originates an idea—a watcher of the atmosphere, a man who . . . takes his observations, and when

he finds the wind in a certain quarter trims to suit it. Such a person may be a powerful Minister, but he is no more a great statesman than the man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip. Both are disciples of progress; both perhaps may get a good place. But how far the original momentum is indebted to their powers, and how far their guiding prudence regulates the lash or the rein, it is not necessary for me to notice."

Disraeli never stooped to trim; he always aspired to steer. When he started as a brilliant author, electric with ideas derided but since accepted—as an imaginative originator, "full of deep passions and deep thoughts"—it would have been easy for him to have followed the triumphal car of the Whigs who invited him.¹ It would have been easy for him to have suited himself to Sir Robert Peel's vicissitudes of private, and desertion of public opinion, embodied in a great party which had raised him to power. In obeying again the central ideas which quickened him from the first, Disraeli broke up the "Young England" party, which looked up to and cheered him, whose main objects he inspired, and eventually realised. And in 1867, as we shall see, so far from "dishing" the Liberals with their own measure of Reform, he carried, in the teeth of his own supporters, one on lines peculiar to his own perpetual view of the subject, and at length achieved what he had urged in the 'thirties, the 'forties, and the 'fifties.

In the stubborn pursuit of his aims Disraeli even courted unpopularity. On every occasion when the object of the Jew bill was involved with other measures which he considered prejudicial to its due interests, he risked misconstruction by withholding his vote. During the long spell of 1859-66, when a dispirited, and sometimes disloyal following often left him alone in his seat, he continued the pronouncements alike and the reticence which they disrelished. During the six years previous he dared to offend them equally by hammering the Government's foreign policy, and insisting on his own convictions. Nobody, again, more regretted the precipitancy of Lord Derby in 1852, although his rash assumption of office

¹ Through Lord Durham, Lord J. Russell, and Lord Melbourne, whom he met early at Mrs. Norton's.

afforded Disraeli his first hard-won opportunity of leadership. During three separate sets of discreditable intrigues to dethrone him, he kept place, counsel, and temper without wheedling concessions or recriminating revenges, though none could strike home harder when he chose.

“ . . . Ah, why should such enthusiasm ever die ? Life is too short to be little. Man is never so manly as when he feels deeply, acts boldly, and expresses himself with frankness and with fervour.”

The fact that both the mere egotist, and the man of intense personality, must, from the need of their respectively low and lofty concentrations, be self-centred, and infuse their temperaments into the objects of their energy, favours, it is true, the mistake to which I have referred. But the one is pettily fixed on self, the other intent on ideals. He leads a life of ideas which form his atmosphere, and which emanate from it. He mounts the chariot to drive it to a distant goal, while the other borrows or pilfers it for his own immediate convenience. Egoism—if I may coin a distinction—is one thing, egotism another. Goethe was an egoist—he is full of a radiating self ; but such egoism is, if we reflect, the very opposite of the egotist, who is full of a shrivelled selfishness. Such were the later phases of Napoleon, who changed from a generous imparter into an absorbing monopolist. That was egotism. All genius, however, has been egoist, and ever will be ; for genius is at once the ear, sensitive to the subtlest appeals of existence, and the voice which constrains others to enter the realm of its ideas. Its sensitiveness is part of its strength, and in this respect it shares the self-consciousness of the artist. It is in the real sense auto-suggestive ; it implants ideas which its will generates into events. It is in some degree that—

“ . . . which many people take for want of heart.

They err.—’Tis merely what is called mobility,
A thing of temperament, and not of art,

Though seeming so from its supposed facility ;
And false though true ; for surely they’re sincerest
Who are strongly acted on by what is nearest.”

And its faults, as I shall show in my closing chapter, are associated with its very qualities.

Genius is both light and heat ; it combines enthusiasm with insight. Such a genius was Disraeli. He was eminently a man of ideas, and not merely of abnormal perceptions. This distinction again is material, and too often ignored.

The eminently perceptive man is at root a critic, while the man of ideas is by prerogative a creator ; and yet the quick perceiver is often mistaken for a creative genius, and keenness confused with originality. In politics, for instance, this was the case with such different beings as Peel and Gambetta ; in literature, with Addison and Arnold ; in art, with Kneller and Lawrence. Disraeli's ideas were at once his creations and companions, and he moved in their inner circle with a sort of extravagant intensity. They were no shadows. He was convinced of their substance almost to fatalism, and his immense will-power forced and projected them into movement. In his extreme youth, before his character had matured, these ideas flickered as fantasies. The restlessness of a volition felt, but not yet freed or directed, caused some masquerade of guise, and a perpetual strain on the intuition that sought to forestall experience. Realisation alone, with power and experience, brought repose. But at all periods an idea that had once seized him tinged his whole being. Its reality haunted him till he had given it place and shape.¹ An inward and ideal energy possessed him. Ideas were for him far more tangible, even far more sociable, than the outward and fleeting phantasms around him, as is evidenced in his fiction by his constant habit of transferring environment and transplanting personalities to accentuate their ideal essence. Thus, in *Venetia*, the soul of Lady Byron animates the form of Shelley's wife, while the very date is put back some thirty years, that Shelley himself might be enabled to have braved in action what he mused in poetry. So, again, in *Contarini*, the hero's development blends something of his own with something of his father's character ; while Baron Fleming is his grandfather reincarnated as a noble.² About

¹ I may mention that when he wrote *Alarcos* in six weeks, an intimate (I think Lord Strangford) asked him why he had turned his energies to tragedy. "The idea haunted me," was the reply, "and I could not rest until I had given it expression."

² There is a touch also of his grandfather in the "Mr. Putney Giles"

the ironies of these, the arabesques of his playful fancy flickered. For him they were mostly the pretexts of things, but ideas were the causes, and he loved to contrast "the pretext with the cause;" but even here romance blent with irony, and invested the seemingly trivial with wonder. Some, too, of his ideas hovered, as it were, over the present scene, in a flight bound other-whither and beyond. In a word, Disraeli was an artist, conscious and confident of an over-mastering call. As he has written in a striking passage from the work of his youth, *Contarini Fleming*: "I never labour to delude myself; and never gloss over my own faults. I exaggerate them; for I can afford to face truth, because I feel capable of improvement. . . . I am never satisfied. . . . The very exercise of power teaches me that it may be wielded for a greater purpose. . . . No one could be influenced by a greater desire of knowledge, a greater passion for the beautiful, or a deeper regard for his fellow-creatures. . . . I want no false fame. It would be no delight to me to be considered a prophet, were I conscious of being an impostor. I ever wish to be undeceived; but if I possess the organisation of a poet, no one can prevent me from exercising my faculty, any more than he can rob the courser of his fleetness, or the nightingale of her song."

The "ill-regulated will," "the undercurrent of feelings he was then unable to express," portrayed in *Vivian Grey*, developed into the higher and more elevating purposes of which his transforming imagination was all along capable. That very book contained the germs of what its composition revealed to his own mind—that out of a young adventurer with purpose and genius, the school of life forms a strong character and a great man. In *Contarini Fleming* the irresistible power of predisposition, the hollowness of a nurture which ignores it and substitutes "words" for "ideas," the interactions of imagination and experience, the fatuity of contradicting or overstraining Nature, are pursued; nor, as regards this novel, should it be forgotten that in some portions of its analysis of *Lothair*, who: "never made difficulties, but always overcame them." In both "*Miriam*" (*Alroy*) "*Venetia*" and "*Myra*" (*Endymion*) there are direct transferences from his sister's temperament; and "*St. Barbe*" is far more Hayward than Thackeray.

there are traces in allusive undertone to the fatalities of the great and stricken Dean of St. Patrick's.¹

In Disraeli's case, as so often before him, "the dreaming part of mankind" has "prevailed over the waking." His flouted dreams came true. They still hold sway. To give effectual substance to these higher and abiding dreams, those other dreams of ascendancy, through which alone his will could realise his ideas, were also verified. "It is the will"—he speaks by the lips of the young "Alroy"—"that is father to the deed, and he who broods over some long idea, however wild, will find his dream was but the prophecy of coming fate." "All is ordained," he had said as a stripling, "yet man is master of his own actions."² Disraeli's career was itself a romance—a romance of the will that defies circumstance, and moulds the soil where ideas are to flourish. An inward, personal energy is the parent of faith, and faith in oneself is the sole security for the issue of faith among others. He lived to triumph, but not in order to triumph; and he remains a standing protest against those who believe in cliques and disbelieve in personal influence. The former are only compact in appearance; they are unsympathetic associations, welded together by interest alone. Joint-stock enterprise is not fellowship, and the test of direction is liability. Nor is it without significance that "Fortune," even in the ancient world a real though blind goddess, has come, in the modern, to mean little more than cash; so that capital leans away from labour, plutocracy is cemented, solidarity declines, and worth too often is resolved by the question, "Worth how much?"

It is this idea of personality that lies at the very root of united nationality; for a nation is an idealised individual, no aggregate of atoms. Still less is it the experimenting room of doctrinaires or the dumping-ground of the Tapers and Tadpoles, the Paul Pry's of politics, who "whisper nothings that sound like somethings;" or of those "Marneys," "Fitz-Aquitaines," and "Mowbrays" who deem that the end of an administration is "two garters to begin with;" or again of

¹ Cf. the moralisations in its strange account of the hero's malady.

² *The Infernal Marriage*,

"the good old gentlemanlike times, when Members of Parliament had nobody to please, and Ministers of State nothing to do;" of those who, like "Rigby," mistake peddling with constituencies for representing the country; or of those petty placemen to whom, as he has said, party means the machinery for receiving "£1200" a year, career the pursuit of it, and success its attainment.

"... I prefer" (the passage is from *Sybil*) "association to gregariousness. . . . It is a community of purpose that constitutes society . . . without that men may be drawn into contiguity, but they will continue virtually isolated. . . ." What does this imply but the sympathetic power of personality? The more individual societies become, the greater their efficacy. The less individual they are the more they display the tameness and unfruitfulness that enfeeble a copy.

"But what is an individual," exclaimed "Coningsby," "against a vast public opinion?"

"Divine," said the stranger. "God made man in His own image; but the Public is made by newspapers, Members of Parliament, excise officers, Poor Law guardians. Would Philip have succeeded, if Epaminondas had not been slain? And if Philip had not succeeded? Would Prussia have existed, had Frederick not been born? And if Frederick had not been born? What would have been the fate of the Stuarts, if Prince Henry had not died, and Charles I., as was intended, had been Archbishop of Canterbury?"

This was written in 1844. Since then, would Germany have been united if Bismarck had not been born? And if Bismarck had not been born? In 1865 a powerful party, promising success, reinforced by commanding talent, and concerting an intelligible plan with immense vigour, began to demand the disintegration of Great Britain. And if Disraeli had not been born? —

Nothing is more striking in modern parliamentary life than the growing neglect of the past. Great issues are mooted by men ignorant of, or ignoring, their historical origin. Young members discuss weighty problems with no study save that of

omniscience. The ancestry of events is disregarded. Development is relegated to musty students and mouldy volumes. The fact that statesmanship is able to look forward because it has already looked back, is flouted or forgotten. Public interest is gradually being withdrawn from debate, just because it is getting out of touch with the organic changes of national life. The genius which transfigures facts with imagination has been replaced by the opportunism which invests emptiness with solemnity ; and this, in a country where national growth depends on continuous tradition.

The utterances of Disraeli from the early 'twenties to the latest 'seventies display a wonderful harmony of coherence in progress. They form one long suite of variations on the central *motif* of persistent and consistent ideas. To understand them aright one must view them successively, both in his books and his speeches, which illustrate each other ; nor in so doing should the contexts of personal development, events private as well as public, be lost from sight.

This I have endeavoured to accomplish in the following chapters. I have classified their themes in groups broad enough to admit of kindred topics. After a fresh portrait of Disraeli's personality, I treat first of his constitutional ideas, because these are at the root of his political standpoint ; they underlie, too, his conception of the State. Then follows his attitude towards Labour and the causes it involved. Next come his distinctive views on Church and Christianity ; his views, equally distinctive, on Monarchy occupy a separate chapter. Colonies, Empire, and Foreign Policy are then grouped together ; and it may excite surprise to mark the earliness and the correctness of his prophecies. Under this head I also consider his thoughts on India. America and Ireland succeed ; and here again his justified originality is most remarkable. Perhaps the light chapters on *Society, Literature, Wit, Humour, and Romance*, with the closing study of *Career*, may be considered not the least suggestive. I have not drawn on Mr. Meynell's delightful "Disraeliana" (the pleasure of reading which I purposely postponed), because I wished this portraiture of the man and his mind to be wholly original.

CHAPTER I

DISRAELI'S PERSONALITY

“**A** GREAT mind that thinks and feels is never inconsistent and never insincere. . . . Insincerity is the vice of a fool, and inconsistency the blunder of a knave. . . . Let us not forget an influence too much underrated in this age of bustling mediocrity—the influence of individual character. Great spirits may yet arise to guide the groaning helm through the world of troubled waters—spirits whose proud destiny it may still be at the same time to maintain the glory of the Empire and to secure the happiness of the people.”

So wrote “Disraeli the Younger” during the perplexed crisis of 1833 in his rare pamphlet, *What is he?*¹ which embodies his own large attitude. The sentence is characteristic and prophetic. Its last words were repeated more than forty years afterwards in the message of farewell to his constituents, when he quitted the lively scene of his triumphs for that grave assemblage, of which he once said that its aptitudes were best rehearsed among the tombstones.

In my last three chapters I shall touch on some unique phases of his boyhood, and outline several of his relations to his home, to society, to literature, to character, and to career. But here I shall attempt a less detailed account of his individuality and of the main ideas which flowed from it.

And first let me venture on two glimpses—one of his youth, the other of his age.

¹ So called owing to Lord Grey's query in a letter. His brother had just opposed the young Disraeli, standing as an “independent” and a “reformer” at High (or “Chepping”) Wycombe; and his brilliant speeches on the hustings had been republished as *The Crisis Examined*.

It is not difficult to collect from many scattered presentments some likeness of

"The wondrous boy
That wrote *Alroy*."

Imagine, then, a romantic figure, a Southern shape in a Northern setting, a kind of Mediterranean Byron; for the stock of the Disraelis hailed from the *Sephardim*—Semites who had never quitted the midland coasts, and were powerful in Spain before the Goths. The form is lithe and slender, with an air of repressed alertness. The stature, above middle height. The head, long and compact; its curls, fantastic. The oval face, pale rather than pallid, with dark almond eyes of unusual depth, size, and lustre under a veil of drooping lashes. The chin, pointed with decision. The expression holds one, by turns keen and pensive; about it hovers a strange sense of inner watchfulness and ambushed irony, half mocking in defiance, half eager with conscious power. A languid reserve marks his bearing; it conceals a smouldering vehemence; its observant silence prepares amazement directly interest excites intercourse. Then indeed the scimitar, as it were, flashes forth unsheathed, and dazzles by its breathless fence of words with ideas. This ardour is not always pleasant; it breathes of storm; it speaks out elemental passions and grates against the smooth edges of civilisation. In the London medley he, like his friend Bulwer, studies a purposed posture. Dandyism and listlessness mask unsleeping energy. But at Bradenham, his constant retreat, the "Hurstley" of his last novel, all is natural and unconstrained. Here at least he is free. Here he "drives the quill" with his famous father, reads and rides, meditates and is mirthful. Here, with that gifted sister "Sa"—"Sa," a name soon afterwards doubly endeared to him through Lord Lyndhurst's daughter; "Sa," who, while others doubt or twit, ever believes in and heartens him—he dreams, improvises, discourses. The rest may treat him as a moonstruck Bombastes,¹ but his lofty visions are real

¹ After he had been articled to a firm of solicitors at seventeen, and eventually called to the bar, his father had wished him to enter a government office. Cf. Mr. Lake's "Reminiscences."



DISRAELI THE YOUNGER

After a water colour by A. E. Chalon

to the gentle insight of affection. In the language of Shakespeare's fine colloquy :—

“ ‘ Say what thou art that talk'st of Kings and Queens ? ’ —

‘ More than I seem, and less than I was born to. ’ —

‘ Aye, but thou talk'st as if thou wert a King ! ’ —

‘ Why, so I am in mind, and that's enough. ’ ”

Already, like one of those his biting pen had satirised, he too, it must be owned, teems with “ confidence in the nation —and himself.” There was a daredevilry about him, and in those days a romantic melancholy, akin to that of the Spanish artist Goya. Far behind have faded those consuming pangs of boyish restlessness, when fevered imagination played vaguely on inexperience. Far behind, those schools of “ words ” which never slaked his thirst for ideas, and where he ran wild as rebel ringleader.¹ Far away now, those boxing bouts witnessed by Layard's mother. Past, that earliest and unpublished novel of *Aylmer Papillon*,² which Murray praised but would not print. Past, that fugitive satire of the “ New Dunciad,” which does not deserve to remain waste-paper.³ Past, that abortive journal, which in transforming an old periodical while adopting its name was to have revolutionised opinion.⁴ Vanished, too, those first outbursts of unchastened brilliance under the favouring auspices of the Layards' fair kinswoman, Mrs. Austin. And the vista of his two long

¹ Cf. p. 254.

² It treated of a hero outlawed under the Alien Act by a Ministry resenting a poem (cf. Smiles' “ Memoirs of John Murray ”). Disraeli had also edited a “ history ” of *Paul Jones*. Of his early American pamphlet, I speak later on. A Mr. Powles — “ something in the city ” — was concerned in assisting both this and the *Representative*.

³ Of Keats it sings —

“ Who grasped the Theban shell and struck a tone,
No master yet had wakened — save its own.”

⁴ It succeeded a respectable pro-Canning and pro-Queen-Caroline weekly, to which Disraeli seems to have contributed as a lad also. Its foundation brought him to Sir Walter Scott, and to Lockhart, who at first disdained to be “ editor,” but melted when Disraeli assured him that he would be “ Director-general ” of a controlling organ. Only a temporary breach with Murray was caused by Disraeli's speedy withdrawal from the concern. But for Lockhart, as a “ tenth-rate novelist,” Disraeli expressed contempt in 1833, when he proposed to write for the *Edinburgh*, presided over by Napier. Cf. British Museum, Add. MS. 34,616, f. 45.

journeys have receded; the alternate spells of Venice, the Rhine and Rome, and afterwards of Athens, Constantinople, Jerusalem. Past, also, the strange malady for which his Eastern travels proved the stranger cure. As he muses, the ball is at his feet. Yet, when the daydream fades, is he, perhaps, after all, only Alnaschar of the broken glass, bemoaning vain reveries amid the ruined litter of his overturned basket in the jeering market-place? The seed-time of reflection is over: he pants for action. No more for him the beaten tracks. Hitherto he had fed on books and dreams. The former had led him to a pondered plan, with Bolingbroke for clue and Pitt as example. The latter fired his ambition—his presumption—to realise them by restoring vanished life to a now mouldering party—by suiting old forms to new phases and heading them.

Next morning the secluded scholar, so friendly a contrast with his daring son, is bound for Oxford to receive his long delayed honours. This very day that son's earliest election-procession starts from the doorway of the tranquil manor house.¹ Already the budding genius has descried the dim future of his country, which he has proclaimed must be governed for and through the nation; of which, too, he has already sung in halting verse:—

“ . . . ceased the voice
Of Great Britannia; vanished as it ceased
Her glance imperial.”

What matter now the debts, the duns, the embarrassments for which he blushes?² What matter the heartless allurements of siren fashion? His course is clear before him. He must win. He “has begun several times many things, and

¹ This is no imaginary picture. Cf. Isaac Disraeli's letters in the British Museum, Add. MS. 34,571, ff. 94, 96. Bradenham Manor, now the residence of my friend, Mr. Graves, had been under Queen Anne the seat of the Earl of Strafford through his marriage with a City heiress.

² In a future chapter I shall revert to this episode, which Disraeli ever deplored. His valet, in bachelor days, at 35, Duke Street, St. James—one Whittlestone, like Disraeli's servant in the East, Byron's Tita, provided for as attendant in a government office, by his master—used to retail many scraps of such gossip. The young Disraeli's novels, he averred, were written in bed. Heroes truly should dispense with valets.

has often succeeded at last." As for the taunt of "adventurer," what are all original spirits that "burst their birth's invidious bar" but adventurers? Such were Chatham,¹ and Burke, and Canning, and Peel himself. But when the "adventurer" is one by temperament as well as occasion, how miraculous becomes his progress! "Adventures are to the adventurous."

"The man who with undaunted toils
Sails unknown seas to unknown soils,
With various wonders feasts his sight:
What stranger wonders does he write!"

Many of us remember Disraeli in his age as he sauntered dreamily and slowly with the late Lord Rowton, and none who ever heard one of his last orations in the House of Lords can forget how, even when he was in pain, he sprang from his seat with the quick step of youth. The physical charm had disappeared. Few who gazed on that drawn countenance could have discerned in it the poetry and enthusiasm of his prime; only the unworn eyes preserved their piercing fires, and the sunken jaw was still masterful. A long discipline of iron self-control, much disillusion, growing disappointments with crowning triumphs, and latterly a great desolation, had subdued the fiercer force and the elastic buoyancy of his hey-day. Yet the intellectual charm, and the spell of mind and spirit had deepened their outward traces. Fastidious discernment, dispassionate will, penetrating insight, courage,² patience, a certain winning gentleness underneath the scorn of shams, stamp every lineament. Below habitual *insouciance*, intensity, bigness of soul and purpose are prominent. The arch of the noble brow retains its height and curve. Surrounded though he be by friends and flatterers, he looks lonelier than of old. "I do not feel solitude," he said, "it gives one repose." Interested in every movement, and even in every trifle that engages thought, his gaze appears more turned within.

¹ In *The Press* (1853-59)—which vies with Swift in the *Examiner* and Bolingbroke in the *Craftsman*, and to which Lord Derby and Shirley Brooks also contributed—Disraeli finely characterises Chatham as "a forest oak in a suburban garden."

² Of this virtue, singled out with domestic purity by Gladstone for praise in Disraeli, the late Lady J. Manners wrote, "He feared nobody but God." In my eighth chapter I shall quote Jowett's verdict.

We know from Lady John Manners,¹ and from other sources, how he loved flowers, and forestry, and study during the dinner-hour, more than all the social glitter; how he communed with the unseen; how far-reaching were his sympathies; what interest and curiosity he displayed in every form of career and purpose; how often to all the splendour which he had conquered he preferred converse with the weak, the lowly, the suffering; how his wise counsel and inexhaustible resource were sought and coveted by cottagers, by the toilers whose cause he made his own, by princes; how delicately considerate he was in his appointments, and for all in contact with him, how he would sacrifice a keen personal wish rather than disturb a pleasure or abridge a holiday; and yet how his playfulness of fancy mixed in pithy ironies with his very considerateness. A familiar instance—that of the attached servant who was to enjoy “the pleasures of memory”—occurred as he lay dying from the illness long and bravely concealed even from his intimates. He was truly unselfish, and he was never known to blame a subordinate. If things went wrong, he took the whole burden on his own shoulders. He exerted infinite pains to understand the conditions of and the organisations affecting labour.² The Buckinghamshire peasants still cherish his memory; and it may be said with truth that the deepest affections of this extraordinary man, whom vapid worldlings sneered at as a callous cynic, were reserved for his country, his county, his home, and his friends, for effort and for distress. Many a young aspirant to fame, moreover, in literature or public life, has owed much to his generous encouragement. He liked to dwell on the vicissitudes of things,³ and his own motto, “*Forti nihil difficile*,” represents his conviction. In private, when he was not entertaining, his habits were of the simplest. In two things only he was profuse; books and light. He loved to

¹ “The Later Years of Lord Beaconsfield,” by Janetta, Lady J. Manners, Blackwood, 1881.

² In 1852 he sought and obtained a long interview with Feargus O'Connor, whose correspondence in the *Star* he had utilised seven years before in *Sybil*.

³ “Thus, amid all the strange vicissitudes of life, we are ever, as it were, moving in a circle.”

see every room of Hughenden illuminated with candles. He was utterly careless of money. It is related, that when he accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, he sent for the celebrated Mr. Padwick, and asked for a necessary advance. "On what security?" inquired the sporting speculator. "That of my name and my career," was the answer. And the money was at once forthcoming, and punctually repaid. As is well known, he would often make his greatest efforts half dinnerless; and his delight was, after the strain and the plaudits had ceased, to betake himself in the dim hours of dawn to the supper which his devoted wife, who spared him every detail of management, had prepared, and there to recount to her the excitements of the debate. The pair would certainly have endorsed those verses of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, of which Byron was so fond—

"But when the long hours of public are past,
And we meet with champagne and a chicken at last,
May every fond pleasure that moment endear,
Be banished afar both discretion and fear!
Forgetting or scorning the airs of the crowd,
He may cease to be formal, and I to be proud,
Till lost in the joy, we confess that we live,
And he may be rude, and yet I may forgive."

His public and touching tribute to Mrs. Disraeli deserves repetition here; nor will the reader forget, among many hackneyed stories, that stern rebuke to the triflers overheard discussing the reasons for his marriage—"Because of a feeling to which such as you are strangers—gratitude."

It was at Edinburgh, in 1867, when his old ally, Baillie Cochrane (Lord Lamington), toasted Mrs. Disraeli as her illustrious husband's helper and his own dear friend for many years before Disraeli met her.¹ Disraeli opened with the characteristic remark that their mutual intimate "certainly had every opportunity of studying the subject to which he has drawn attention." And he went on to say, "I do owe to that lady all I think that I have ever accomplished, because she has supported me with her counsel, and consoled me by the sweetness of her mind and disposition." Six years after his

In 1832.

marriage, he had dedicated the three volumes of his *Sybil*, "To one whose noble spirit and gentle nature ever prompt her to sympathise with the suffering ; to one whose sweet voice has often encouraged, and whose taste and judgment have ever guided their pages ; the most severe of critics, but—a perfect wife."

Several of his nice things were said in Scotland, and one of the nicest was his compliment when he was installed Rector of Glasgow University. He described his visit to Abbotsford, whither he had repaired in his extreme youth with an enthusiastic letter from John Murray the First, his father's old friend, to Sir Walter Scott, that father's old acquaintance. "He showed me," he said of the laird, "his demesne, and he treated me, not as if I was an obscure youth, but as if I were already Lord Rector of Glasgow University."¹

Disraeli's marriage was the happiest turning-point in his career ; and that which had begun partly in interest, soon developed into the warmest, the most entire and the most mutual affection. Mrs. Disraeli, at a great country house, always used to commence conversation by the query, "Do you like my Dizzy? Because, if you don't——" From another, on a visit most advantageous to him, Disraeli departed, despite pressing remonstrance, on the plea that the "air" disagreed with Mrs. Disraeli—because she had complained of their host's rudeness. It will one day be found that to this gifted and selfless woman, English history owed much at several serious conjunctures. I cannot resist relating a good story in another vein. Shortly after Disraeli's marriage, a guest at Grosvenor Gate, pointing to a portrait of the late Mr. Wyndham Lewis, Mrs. Disraeli's first husband and with Disraeli member for Maidstone, asked him whom it represented. "Our former colleague," was the rejoinder. At a much later date Mr. Frith was painting a group in which Disraeli figured. As her husband was going, Mrs. Disraeli whispered to the artist, "Remember one thing, if you don't mind, his pallor is his beauty." She was afraid that his complexion would be coloured. To the last she would say,

¹ His Edinburgh speech of 1867 and his Glasgow address of 1873—on "Representation" and "Equality" respectively rank among his best.

as she did during his interrupted speech at Aylesbury in 1847:—" *He* mind them! Not a bit of it. He's a match for them all." Sir Horace Rumbold has just told us how, at the scene of Disraeli's investiture as Earl, a sob was heard from the crowd. It was the grief of an old and faithful servant sighing, "Ah! If only *she* had lived to see him now!"

Like childless men in general, he was devoted to children. More than one still living remembers his happy words of playful intimacy. To women from the days of his pet Sheridans to those of the present Lady Currie, he appealed with magnetism throughout his career, and there are few more romantic episodes than his meetings, after hesitation, with the elderly Mrs. Bridges Williams at the fountain in the Exhibition of 1862, the existing correspondence which ensued, and the thumping legacy which crowned it. One who has read that correspondence has assured me that its gentle chivalry is most striking. In the midst of engrossing occupation he never ceased to cheer the old lady with gossip of his doings, and even to argue with her, as on an affair of state, regarding the advisability of Struve's seltzer water as a remedy.

Of Queen Victoria's affection for him I will only say that it was because he treated her as a woman. She grew to lean on his wisdom and his judgment. On more than one occasion he acted as mediator in her family. He was sincerely attached to her. His witticism, when asked for a reason of her favour, will bear repetition: "I never argue, I never contradict, but I sometimes forget."

His influence over the late Queen was more remarkable even than has hitherto been disclosed. And in this regard I am able to state that, while out of office, he negotiated with extreme tact, under delicate circumstances, the peerage conferred on a most amiable prince, now no more; and further, that at each stage of all its bearings Queen Victoria consulted and deferred to his counsel, kindness, and resource. I may add that he also devised a means of providing the same lamented prince with an absorbing occupation.

He was a firm friend; loyalty he always extolled as a sovereign virtue. Not many have the faculty for friendship in old age as Lord Beaconsfield had it. His passion for

mastery, his addiction to mystery were rivalled by his immense faithfulness. If he was always "the man of destiny," he was also ever "faithful unto death." And his real friendships were warm as well as constant. While he was at Glasgow to be inaugurated Lord Rector of its University, he heard good tidings of an old associate. "Mrs. Disraeli and I," he wrote, "were over-joyed, and we danced a Highland fling in our nightgowns." The picture raises a smile,¹ but it also strikes an unexpected chord.

Of music and of art in general he was a devotee, as many passages in his novels attest. He had his own theories of their influence on composition and on literature. Murillo was his favourite painter, Mozart his favourite composer. He ever deplored the insensibility of the Government to the duty of elevating taste for the beautiful. When the Blacas collection of gems was in the market at the price of £70,000, the Administration of the day at first refused to entertain the purchase, but Disraeli persuaded them by offering to find the money himself, if they persisted. In this case, as in so many others (notably that of the Suez Canal shares), imagination forwarded the public interest; for this collection is now worth some threefold of what was expended. When a great work by Raphael was offered to the Government, and Disraeli's colleagues were in doubt, Disraeli sent for the leading dealer, in whose hands the commission had been placed, inspected the picture himself, discoursed charmingly and critically of its merits, with the result that it is now in the National Gallery. Since even trifles about the eminent possess interest, I may add the following story of his old age. He was showing a distinguished visitor (still living) his family portraits at Hughenden. He paused before a pastel of a lovely child wafted by seraphs through the skies. "That," he exclaimed, "is a pet picture; observe how exquisitely the draperies of the angels are arranged. *The baby's me!*" His fondness for beautiful form extended to his own handwriting.

¹ So also does another. Lady Beaconsfield, waiting up, as was her wont even in extreme age, for her husband's return after a critical effort, entered the library in the small hours of the morning (and in *négligée*), and impetuously embraced what turned out to be Lord Cairns writing an important minute before Disraeli's arrival.

In matters of courtesy he was old-fashioned and punctilious. To the last he resented that grotesque disfigurement which was beginning to make manners ugly before he died. Even at an earlier date, "Manners are easy," said "Coningsby," "and life is hard." "And I wish to see things exactly the reverse," said "Lord Henry," "the modes of subsistence less difficult, the conduct of life more ceremonious."

In his fiction it was often objected that he over-depicted great splendour and supreme beauty ; that it was thronged with "daughters" and mansions "of the gods." But, if he erred in these respects, it was from familiarity and not from ostentation, as Lady John Manners has pointed out at some length. "It must be recollected," she wrote, thinking of *Lothair*, "that many of those who most appreciated him, and whose friendship he warmly reciprocated, are surrounded in daily life by a certain amount of state which employs their dependants." So, too, with regard to the peaceful and prosperous marriages of those homes of forty years ago on which he delighted to dwell. He loved the gentle Buckinghamshire landscape, with its treasures of association in every cranny, more than all the remembered luxuriance of the South and glare of the East. And it should also be remembered that his works abound in sympathetic descriptions of all kinds and conditions of men, including the strangest and humblest. They were taken from personal observation, and he himself would penetrate the queerest haunts to gain the most curious insight. The common and the uncommon people fascinated him, for in them he found ideas ; the middling charmed him less. He delighted to invest the seemingly commonplace with significance, and also to strip the pretentiously important of its wonder. Not even Dickens, as I shall hint hereafter, knew or loved his London better. I shall also, in the proper place, touch on the exotic element in his style and accent. Mr. John Morley has aptly compared it to Goethe's dictum about St. Peter's, that, though it is *baroque*, it is always the expression of something great and not merely grandiose. His big words are never for little things. Undoubtedly some of his earliest works are deficient in taste ; and there is a certain fierce hardness in their abrupt violence. Mrs. Austin advised him

in omissions from the original manuscript of *Vivian Grey*; it was to women that he owed his training in these directions. His knowledge was vast and profound, and he exercised the habit of pursuing long trains of thought in reflection. He seldom worked at night, preferring that season for brooding over his ideas. But at all times, contrary to the superficial opinion, he worked long and hard, sometimes over ten hours a day. His gift of divination never dimmed his passion for study, until old age and ill-health warned him that it must pause. He never ceased to deplore the want of "that boundless leisure which we literary men need." To the last, as Lord Iddesleigh has pointed out, he studied the Bible in the earliest hours. In church attendance he was what Mr. Gladstone used to call a "oncer." He was a regular communicant.

By success he was never inflated, by reversals never depressed, although by nature elastic.¹ It was not until 1874 that his power became wholly unfettered, and then foreign crisis claimed the attention that he longed to bestow on social improvements and Colonial Confederation. His three previous spans of office had been equally brief. For some twenty years he headed, at intervals, a despairing Opposition, whose mistrustful murmurs had to be stilled, whose doubts had to be dispelled, and the immense difficulties of whose management he has graphically portrayed in a notable passage from his *Life of Lord George Bentinck*. To the printed diatribes which assailed him he was indifferent. In parliamentary generalship, demanding an infinite insight and management, an instant recognition of movements in the mass, and "creation of opportunity," he was unsurpassed even by Peel, who played on Parliament "as on an old fiddle." To his urgent control even so early as 1854, and when out of office, the correspondence with Spencer Walpole affords a striking insight. "My dear Walpole," he writes on November 29 of that year, "remember to write to the Queen if anything of interest happens to-night. Tell somebody, Harry Lennox or another, to send me a bulletin by this messenger of what is taking place, but not later than ten o'clock, as I shall retire

¹ When Lord Derby came in in 1852, "At last we have got a *status*," he said; "I feel like a young girl going to her first ball."

early, that being my only chance. "Be positive that the financial statement will be made on Friday."¹

What he really valued in power was its faculty of influence. Otherwise it was bitter-sweet. He once told a high aspirant for high office, that as for its *pleasures*, they lay chiefly in contrasting the knowledge it afforded of what was really being done with the ridiculous chatter about affairs in the circles that one frequented.

His wit, his brightness of humour, and lightness of touch, long prevented many of his contemporaries from taking him seriously. Literary statesmen are often belittled by their generation; imaginative statesmen, always. They have usually to await a career after death. The stereotyped character imposed on him till his pluck and power appealed to the nation at large was largely due to the old Whigs ("oligarchy is ever hostile to genius"²), who for years refused to regard him with anything but amusement, yet whose drawing-rooms had been the readiest to applaud those sparkling sallies of 1845 and 1846 that demolished the premier whom they too wished to destroy; that coterie so long trained to make popular causes preserve their exclusive power, and of whom he wrote in 1833, "A Tory, a Radical, I understand; a Whig, a democratic aristocrat, I cannot comprehend." It was not due to the Peelites, who frankly hated him as an open foe. Even the Liberals (many of whom he counted as personal friends), when he warned them of the underground rumblings, ominous of social earthquake in Ireland, shrugged their shoulders; and when he was reported, glass in eye, to have answered a duchess inquisitive about the exact date of the dissolution with "You darling," they split their sides, and guffawed, "There he is again!" They agreed with his old family acquaintance, Bernal Osborne (if it was he), to whom the heartlessness was attributed of saying, when Lord Beaconsfield was stricken with his lingering illness, "Overdoing it, as usual."

And yet how interesting it is to find Disraeli in the

¹ British Museum Add. MS. 34,645, f. 19.

² In *The Press* Disraeli illustrates this historical fact with infinite knowledge in a remarkable passage.

Grant-Duff diaries discoursing eagerly in the faint dawn on Westminster Bridge of Lord John Russell. Perhaps Disraeli's greatest admirer among opponents was Cobden, and that admiration was warmly returned. Both of them had one great virtue in common, and a rare one, especially in public life—gratitude; and both could afford to be generous. Read the letter now first disclosed by Mr. John Morley, whose literary appreciation of Disraeli is manifest, in which Disraeli sought to win Gladstone with “deign to be magnanimous.”

Disraeli's own magnanimity—frankly owned by Mr. Gladstone—was conspicuous though it is unfamiliar. During the decade of the 'fifties, on at least four occasions¹ he offered to sacrifice his personal position to Graham, Palmerston, and Gladstone successively for the interests of his country and his party. In 1868 and 1869 he indignantly defended the last against the carping “tail” of his supporters, rebuking alike the “frothy spouters of sedition,” and those who preferred remembrance of “accidental errors” to gratitude for “splendid gifts and signal services.” His unstinted praise of worthy foes, his conduct even towards the ostracised Dr. Kenealy, are constant proofs of a leading *trait*. He always forebore to strike an opponent to please the whim or the passion of the popular breeze.

À propos of Mr. Gladstone, who himself paid a tribute to the absence of rancour in his rival, I may be permitted to recall an anecdote told me by the late Sir John Millais. When Disraeli stood (though then suffering, he refused to *sit*) for his last portrait, his “dear Apelles” noticed his gaze riveted on an engraving of the artist's fine portrait of the great premier. “Would you care to have it?” he inquired. “I was rather shy of offering it to you.” “I should be delighted to have it,” was the reply. “Don't imagine that I have ever disliked Mr. Gladstone; on the contrary, my only difficulty with him has been *that I could never understand him.*” And Carlyle himself thawed when Disraeli, whom he had so long hysterically abused, but many of whose ideas, as I shall prove, he shared, offered him public recognition in a letter which gave as a reason for uninheritable honours, “I have remembered that you too, like myself, are childless.” But

¹ In 1850, 1852, 1855, and 1859.

Carlyle, who had aspersed him, never denied that he looked facts in the face without mistaking phantoms for them. Even from the first he owned length of view. In his old age a certain far-awayness of expression was very noticeable.

I have mentioned Mr. Gladstone. It was well for England that two great attitudes towards great questions should have been thrown into sharp relief for nearly a score of years by the duel between two great personalities ; and it was also well for Disraeli that "England does not love coalitions." We know from Mr. Gladstone's own lips that much in his rival had won his respect, while from Mr. Morley we glean that Mr. Gladstone even struggled with a sort of subacid liking for one whom he too could "never comprehend."¹ The letters of both after Lady Beaconsfield's death are refreshing instances of how sworn enemies of the arena may grasp hands under the softening solemnity of bereavement, and for a moment forget the hard words which, under irritation, they certainly used of each other.

Disraeli was older than Gladstone, and had been early acquainted with him. In the 'thirties he sat next to "young Gladstone" at the Academy dinner, and regretted that he had been relegated from "the wits," with whom he had been ranged in the year previous, to "the politicians." In the 'forties Disraeli made one of his few mistakes in prognostic, when he wrote to his sister, "I doubt if he has an 'avenir' ;" but the significance of Gladstone's resignation at this juncture on "Maynooth," and the peculiar circumstances of the Peelites must be borne in mind. Disraeli could scarcely then divine the surprises of oscillation in store.

Except in vigour of undaunted character, and in a sort of inward loneliness, their qualities were opposed. The intensity of the one was austere, imperious, imposing, and didactic ; of the other, buoyant, lively, and poignant. Frequently the

¹ Like most of the Peelites, Mr. Gladstone was not proof against a certain air of over-righteous condescension and patronage. Even in the 'sixties he notes in his diary that, meeting Disraeli at a time of trial, he extended his hand, which was "kindly accepted." But he honestly admired his gifts, and in 1859 generously disdained to "bargain" him "out of the saddle."

flippancy of certain leaders provoked his gravity ; more frequently the solemnity of others upset his own. Gladstone moved by violent reaction and hasty rebound ; Disraeli, by a spring of step, it is true, but of a step measured, wary, and equal. Disraeli stamped himself on his age ; it was often the "Time-Spirit" that impressed itself on Mr. Gladstone, a list of whose changeful "convictions"¹ from 1836 to 1896 might fill a small volume. Again, Disraeli's utterance left a stronger sense of reserve power, of something serious behind the veil. Mr. Gladstone's phases, always sincere, in the main struck more the conscience of certain sections ; Disraeli's ideas, the national feelings. Mr. Gladstone's subtleties were those of a theologian ; they did not quicken the lay mind. Disraeli's were the subtleties of an artist ; they put things in new perspectives. It might be said that by nature and unconscious bent, the one hid simplicity under the form of subtlety, while with the other the process was the converse. In oratory, Mr. Gladstone convinced by height and redundancy of enthusiasm, by depth of feeling and weight or wealth of words and gestures ; Disraeli, more by grasp, incisiveness, and point ; his imagination played all round many sides of his subject. Gladstone's eloquence resembled the storminess and the mist of the North Sea ; Disraeli's, the strange lights and shadows, the subtle and tideless lustre of the Mediterranean. As Mr. Gladstone warmed to his theme, he increased in eloquence ; his perorations are always great. It was in peroration that Disraeli sometimes failed, except in his after-dinner speeches, which never missed fire from start to finish.

Mr. Gladstone was saturated, Disraeli tintured, with the classics. Mr. Gladstone was essentially the scholar, and he was Homeric, while Disraeli was Horatian and Tacitean. His ready acquaintance with Latin masterpieces was shown when he first

¹ Not only convictions, but tactics also. Mr. Gladstone often blamed actions in others which he afterwards adopted ; Disraeli never did. I subjoin a few instances. In 1852 he blamed Disraeli's budget-proposal for repealing half the malt tax ; he himself afterwards repealed the whole. In 1867 he blamed Disraeli's first introduction of the Reform Act by resolutions ; next year he did the same with his Irish Church Bill. In 1869 he severely blamed Disraeli for resigning without meeting Parliament ; in 1874 he himself followed suit.

took the oaths as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and hit off a most happy quotation on the spur of the moment ; nor will it be forgotten that once, when he was citing a classic in the House, he added, "Which, for the sake of the successful capitalists around me, I will now try to translate."

Again, despite Mr. Gladstone's immense versatility, there was always something cloistral about him. He himself confessed that till he was fifty he did not "know the world." I venture to doubt if he ever knew it, and it was just this academic simplicity that so often led his huge brain-power to deal with unsubstantial material.

Mr. Gladstone will not live through his books. He was far more a writer than an author, though he was always distinguished in all his undertakings. But he was doctrinaire ; and he was almost devoid of any real sense of humour. On the appearance of "Nicholas Nickleby" he owned its merit, but singled out its pathos with the criticism that he was grieved by the absence from it of the religious sentiment—"No Church !" In this respect Disraeli and Gladstone were brought into amusing contrast during the Bulgarian atrocity campaign. Mr. Gladstone had characterised the Premier's attitude as "diabolical." Disraeli, in a speech, referred to Mr. Gladstone's having called him "a devil." Mr. Gladstone denied the impeachment, and asked for verse and chapter. Disraeli rejoined by writing that "the gentlemen who so kindly assist me in the conduct of public affairs" had used their best endeavours to ascertain the precise time and place when the Prince of Darkness had been named, but hitherto without success.

A famous bookseller, with whom both statesmen frequently conversed, used to recount that Disraeli once inquired, as was his wont, what of new interest was forthcoming. He mentioned one of Mr. Gladstone's Vatican pamphlets. "No," was the answer ; "please not that. Mr. Gladstone is a powerful writer, but nothing that he writes is literature."

In the House of Commons Disraeli had schooled himself from the first to conceal the emotions of a nature naturally quick and sensitive. He early lit on two mechanical devices for this purpose : the one was to stroke his knees regularly

with his hand, the other to scan the clock. When he was much angered it was only by a change of colour that his agitation was ever betrayed. It must be confessed that he loved to "draw" Mr. Gladstone, and those who remember how, when Disraeli sat down and relapsed into impassivity, Mr. Gladstone jumped up with a look of rage and a voice of thunder, will admit that both performances were perfect. But the audience expected the scene which became habitual, and even supreme actors are influenced by the expectation of their audience. Neither Gladstone nor Disraeli ever stooped to ill-nature. Great men are not petty. But the moral indignation of the one, and the intellectual indignation of the other, which sometimes exchanged places, lent the semblance of pique or of quarrel. Disraeli's dislike of spleen is well displayed by what he once said of Abraham Hayward, the caustic reviewer: "If that man were to be run over in the streets, you would see his venom swimming in the gutters."

In debate, Disraeli's characteristics were a quick readiness and an inexhaustible power of diverting discussion to new channels and of defeating expectation. The occasion when, in reply to Mr. Whalley concerning the Jesuits, he answered that one of their pet devices was to send over Jesuits in disguise to decry the Jesuits, will recur to the memory. His power of literary illustration needs no comment. Two brilliant instances are that of the boots of the Lion embracing the chambermaid of the Boar in connection with the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews*, and that charming one about the Abyssinian expedition, where he reminded us that the standard of St. George was flying over the mountains of Rasselas.¹ In retort he was supreme. Two of the best instances are to be noted in the rejoinder to Peel about "candid friends" and Canning, and in the pause he made when in a much later speech he said, "I have never attacked any one" (cries of "Peel") "unless I was first assailed." I shall relate some others hereafter. His self-imposed impassiveness of demeanour in the House was that of a sentinel on bivouac; it became exaggerated by the contrast of his illustrious compeer's

¹ Some of the best in his earliest speeches are derived from "Don Quixote."

extreme excitability. Disraeli was very zealous for the honour of the House in which he passed the greater portion of his life. On one occasion a young and violent adversary insinuated that Disraeli had told a lie. Disraeli calmly cleared himself to the general satisfaction, and his denouncer began to feel uncomfortable ; still more so when he was sent for to the great man's private room. What was his surprise when he was shaken warmly by the hand. "We all make mistakes," said Disraeli, "when we are young. But please to remember all your life that the House of Commons is a house of gentlemen."

For sheer insight into the march of ideas and reach of vision there is no comparison between the two. Even in the 'forties Disraeli perceived that the coming choice lay between absolute democracy and a monarchical democracy. Afterwards—in the early 'fifties, while monarchy in England was still far from popular—he laid his plans—as is apparent from his contributions to his organ, *The Press*, in 1853—to popularise monarchy and educate democracy before enfranchising it ; and, not till that was accomplished, to re-imperialise Great Britain. "He has not," he wrote in 1853 of Lord John Russell, "comprehended that for the last twenty years the choice is between the maintenance of those institutions and habits of thought which preserve monarchy, and that gradual change into absolute democracy to which Tocqueville somewhere rashly considered all the tendencies of our age impel the destinies of Europe. . . . The Whigs should have been conservative of the reformed constitution, and have developed it. . . ." ¹ While Gladstone was refining a rather tortuous conscience into making the forlorn Peelites alternate between the Conservatives and the Whigs, Disraeli was reconstructing and developing a national party. While Gladstone and Sidney Herbert, in righteous indignation at Peel's memory, were enraged at the delinquency of not struggling for absolute protection when the Derby Ministry assumed office, Disraeli showed that the *principle* of his struggle (continued as regarded the sugar repeal) had been land and labour. He must now benefit these by alleviations, rather than, as a responsible Minister, attempt an upheaval of what the nation

¹ Letters to the Whigs, *The Press*, May 7, 1853.

had finally endorsed, and set private opinion as to particular measures at variance with the possibility of government at all. Had he done so he would have been doing what Fox himself had not attempted with regard to Catholic emancipation, what Lord John Russell had not thought of in 1847, what no responsible Minister could have compassed, and what, Lord John Russell added, the Whigs could not do in 1835. And yet, out of sheer honest hatred, he was vilified by those "high and stubborn spirits who, with the severity peculiar to those censors who cannot aspire to be consuls, refuse to acknowledge that there could be any virtue of necessity, . . . and could not enlarge their comprehension of the requisites of a statesman beyond quotations from 'Hansard.' There were surely some juster thinkers in the House of Commons who must have trembled at the doctrine that men in office are rigidly to carry out the opinions they proposed in opposition."¹ That, he points out, is the function of opposition, and the duty of supporting opinions which a nation has cancelled never arises unless those opinions have sent you to office. As he puts it, "Themis is the goddess of opposition, but Nemesis sits in Downing Street." In the overthrow of Peel lay a very different moral, and by that overthrow he wished to lay bare the choice between "Liberal opinions" and "popular principles," between Peel's sudden adoption of the "physical enjoyment" theory of regeneration and his own. By that destruction he eventually ended the Whigs and Peelites alike, and set before the country the true choice that awaited it, instead of the perplexity of parties² which, joined to detestation of himself, caused the coalition of 1853 and prevented the contrast of the ideas which really divided the minds of men from being prominent in true proportions.

¹ Letters to the Whigs, *The Press*, May 14, 1853.

² Disraeli always insisted on the indispensability of the party system. As he pointed out of Bolingbroke, so in his own case, the idea of a "national" party had to be accommodated to conservatism. Gladstone, too, said of Peel, in 1846, that "to abjure party was impossible" (Morley, i. 295; cf. Disraeli's *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, p. 224). After repeal was carried, Peel gave great offence to his followers—and especially to Mr. Gladstone—by singling out its illustrious and original champion for praise.

As a practical statesman, Disraeli thought more of those moral elements by which the State can square private duty with public interest ; Gladstone, more of those elements above and beyond conduct. Gladstone was perhaps more of an apostle, Disraeli of a seer. Gladstone owned a noble heart with lofty spiritual standards, and an enormous quality of moral resentment ; but his Church views coloured his life as much as his religious convictions, while his minute and perplexing scruples too often changed the forms of his enthusiasms, led zeal to chime with prejudice, and sometimes sent him astray altogether into self-deception.

Gladstone was a strange compound of diverse elements—of Highlander and Lowlander, of Scotland, Liverpool, Oxford, and Italy. In some respects he might even be termed the Dante of politics ; but in others he was occasionally deemed its Ignatius Loyala. Disraeli, on the other hand, depended on his singular force of independence and of native sight and foresight. Those who admired the early Gladstone as Sir Galahad never wished him to sit on the seat of Merlin ; nay, Gladstone himself perpetually deemed Disraeli, Machiavelli, or even Cagliostro. In relation to Disraeli, Gladstone would have perhaps addressed England with “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you ?” while Disraeli might have retorted by the witticism of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, on the eagerness of James the Second to drag his country to heaven with him. It was just Disraeli’s originality and length of view that caused him to be maligned as well as misunderstood, though by some his conduct towards Peel was not unnaturally eyed askance. And yet, in Mr. Morley’s “Life,” Lord John Russell is to be found vindicating his own share in that transaction,¹ and Sir James Graham himself admitting that Peel provoked what he suffered.² In the eyes of many,

¹ “As for the Irish bill on which he had turned Peel out, it was one of the worst of all coercion bills ; Peel, with 117 followers, evidently could not have carried on the Government, and what sense could there have been in voting for a bad bill in order to retain in office an impossible Ministry ?”—He might have added that the bill—supported some months earlier by Lord John and Lord G. Bentinck—under protest as only excusable through urgency, was delayed by Peel to carry the repeal, until its necessity had vanished.

² He said (1846) : “. . . It was no wonder they (the Protectionists)

Gladstone was Homer's "old man of the sea" trying to hold Proteus, and yet none proved more Protean through enlarging aspirations than "the old man" himself. Perhaps Gladstone regarded the world more as the "Pilgrim's Progress," Disraeli more as "Vanity Fair." Gladstone had more sail,¹ Disraeli more ballast. The one floated on waves of agitation, the other desired a strong government by steadying the people and attaching them to institutions. Moreover, Gladstone constantly viewed the State from the standpoint of his particular Church opinions. Disraeli believed that the principle of the Revolution had never been perfected by the due development of popular institutions. He agreed with Pym that "the best form of government is that which doth dispose and actuate *every* part and member of a State to the common good."

Disraeli owned, of course, his foibles, though he was too proud ever to be very vain. As we shall find later on, when I come to his faults of temperament, his grasp of ideas occasionally pressed them too literally both on life and letters. He tended to overstrain his lights and shadows. His imagination sometimes ran riot in its colours, and throughout tended to exaggerate the forms of events, though hardly ever their significance, which he was often the first to divine. He is said to have cherished some superstitions about lucky days and unlucky colours, but for these I cannot vouch. I can, however, for the fact that he was once seen by intimates to wear a green velvet smoking-coat, though one of the few occasions on which he troubled the newspapers was to refute

regarded themselves as betrayed, and unfortunately it had been the fate of Sir R. Peel to perform the same operation twice." From the party standpoint there was abundant justification. Gladstone in old age declared that Disraeli's brilliant philippics surpassed even their reputation, and that, under their lash, Peel sat powerless." Cf. Morley's "Gladstone," i. 296, iii. 465. "Dealt with them with a kind of righteous dulness"—"The Protectionist secession due to three men. Derby contributed prestige; Bentinck backbone; and Dizzy parliamentary brains." The real fault found with Disraeli by his enemies (but afterwards) was that he "did not care a straw" for Protection. The reader must judge after my two next chapters.

¹ It was a sail, however, that could not bear being crossed by contrary winds. From youth upwards Gladstone could never brook opposition.

the slander of having, when young, appeared in green trousers.¹ And here I may perhaps be pardoned for inserting a slight story about Mrs. Disraeli, which comes from the same source as the last. Dr. Guthrie was once staying at Grosvenor Gate, and invited his hostess to visit him at Glasgow. "I will," she smiled, "if you will promise to wear your kilt in the streets." "Perhaps I will," he replied, with hesitation. "You had better be careful, Guthrie," interposed Disraeli, "for that woman, I assure you, means what she says."

In taste and in phrase he was naturally extravagant, but his epigrams were never for the sake of paradox, and were always the summaries of wisdom and reflection. They were light, not frivolous; they were imaginative proverbs. There never was a wittier man, and his wit lent itself to his ironic humour. He loved effects that struck imagination, but ever for a crucial purpose. It was said of him by an intimate that one of his sentences—and in conversation he was sparing—left more behind than a long talk with others of consummate talent. As for the scathing sarcasm—his weapon of self-defence during his earlier stages—at times over-savage and belying his normal cheeriness—sobriety of judgment is compatible with—

"The stinging of a heart the world hath stung."

But, undoubtedly, the too quick transitions of a susceptible fancy from—

"Grave to gay, from lively to severe,"

often irritated and even offended not only the dull, but the serious. And yet in life, as in literature, is there more than one step in the descent from the sublime to the ridiculous?

Like all celebrated wits, he suffered both from the ascription of his own *bons mots* to others, and from those of others being fathered upon him. Thus the "without a redeeming

¹ In 1831 Sir Henry Bulwer—*teste* Mr. Frederick Greenwood—was asked by his famous brother to meet his marvellous new friend at dinner. The company was all young, ambitious, and able; yet all agreed that their master was "the man in the green trousers." Perhaps they were not quite so green as Sir Henry's recollection painted them.

vice" (about Lord Hatherley) was his, not Westbury's, while the "dinner all cold except the ices," was said not by him, but by Sir David Dundas. His pithy sentences were simply one manifestation of his naturally laconic turn of mind.

He was occasionally over-adroit, especially in his desire to gain distinguished recruits for his party; and he sometimes, perhaps, magnified the machinations of secret conspiracies, although their hidden tyranny was gauged by him with unerring instinct. His predilection both in art and nature was for extremes. Full of atmosphere himself, he owned the social nerves which suffer overmuch from lack of it in others. He detested bores, those masterpieces of nature's bad art. One of them (if I may say so without disrespect to his kindness and amiability, since departed) has told with artless humour how at one of the last dinner-parties that Lord Beaconsfield attended, he engaged him in conversation, but was pained to notice how ill and absent he seemed. Suddenly, however, on the arrival of a distinguished guest, a Russian diplomatist, the great man brightened and grew young again, as if by miracle!

After his elevation to the peerage,¹ when he would often revisit the "glimpses of the moon," and watch new members with rapt interest, on one occasion he listened patiently to a long speech of ideal dreariness from the lips of one unknown to him. He inquired, as usual, who the speaker was, and learned that Mr. —— had no other peculiarity but deafness. "Poor fellow!" he sighed, "and yet he seems unaware of his natural advantages. He cannot hear himself speak."

Of Disraeli's attitude towards fashionable society, as well as towards that which really fascinated him, I shall say more in my eighth chapter; but one incident of his old age must be presented here. I can vouch for it, since it was told me by an eye-witness—a political opponent.

It was after "Peace with honour"²—after he had

¹ The title of "Beaconsfield," long before foreshadowed in *Vivian Grey*, was adopted in homage to the abode of Burke.

² This phrase was used by Disraeli in a speech of the 'fifties. Its origin, though not its phrasing, is to be found in Bolingbroke.

"descended from the Teutonic chariot," after the congress where he discovered the alternative Russian map of Bulgaria, concealed by diplomacy, where he earned Bismarck's undying praise and admiration. The scene was a magnificent reunion in an historic mansion. All the fine flower of society was gathered in a galaxy of splendour and of grandeur. In one of the saloons a brilliant crowd was awaiting Lord Beaconsfield's entry. As the big doors opened, a thrill went through them. Haughty ladies in the feeling of the moment made obeisance as if to royalty, while that pale figure with the inscrutable smile passed along their serried ranks. Unmoved and immovable, he went straight forward, his eyes fixed on the future, scarcely conscious of their presence, except for his recognition of their homage.

Such are some of his leading features. They combine and reconcile the seeming contradictions of a nature at once calm and impetuous, deep and light, astute and far-seeing in affairs of importance ; in trifles, careless. These contrasts, united by genius, pursue the forms of his mind—his ideas. He was, of course, no monster of consistency, but the ideas that animated his actions and utterance sprang from a singularly consistent outlook and a most definite personality. In every case they were the outcome on the one hand of his race, on the other of his nationality. The antithesis between nationality and mere race is most important, and too often ignored. There is no such thing as a nation of a single strain. The national idea is the fusion of reconcilable races, the creation of an artificial and ideal individuality, of a consolidating pattern ; the absorption of discordant races and their replacement by a central idea which subordinates instinct to society. Later civilisation means little else, if we reflect, than a gradual process of this description ; and it is not a little curious that the distinctive greatness of English literature is largely due to the admission and naturalisation of foreign influences—to England's free trade in ideas, to the openness of her literary ports. What would it have proved had it remained purely insular ; if Italy, France, and Germany had not infused both form and spirit ; above all, if it had not been inspired by the noble rhythm of the Englished Bible and by the supreme models of Greece and

Rome? Disraeli's wit, which is to find a due consideration hereafter, is half eighteenth century in form, half talmudic. The shape of his ideas was also partly determined by the time of his birth and by the circumstances of his home.

He was born at the parting of the ways. His early reading, and, indeed, his cast of mind, were steeped in the style of the eighteenth century; but the movements of the nineteenth, the significance of the French Revolution and of Napoleon, who had made all things new, simmered in him from the first, and his earliest reflections were how to attune the democratic idea to the vital institutions of an ancient empire. As regards his home, he was truly, as he has put it, "born in a library;" and this circumstance contributed as much as others to a certain detachment of thought which in politics afforded him the clue to the character of movements, and, above all, to the movements of character; in fiction, as will be apparent from my ninth chapter, it led him to regard things as they appeared of themselves, and not always as they seemed to others; while under the play of fancy he transposed their outward environments to accentuate their essence. Of his father, himself a most interesting study, I shall have more to say in my eighth chapter. Here, I only wish to draw attention to the fact that Isaac Disraeli's influence on his son's ideas was twofold. On the one hand, his views on "pre-disposition," on the use of solitude, on the true meaning of education, on historical "cause and pretext," on the hollowness of "joint-stock felicity," on the self-recognition of creative minds before their late acknowledgment by contemporaries, with others glanced at in my later chapters, were directly derived by Disraeli from his father. From him, too, he inherited his fondness for Burke. On the other hand, Disraeli's native leanings reacted against many of that peripatetic philosopher's opinions. His interpretation of the Bible was, if not at variance with, at any rate different from his father's,¹ and was, I fancy, shared by his sister. His admiration for Bolingbroke, as genius and constitutional interpreter, was in direct opposition, just as that father's own dispassionate outlook

¹ His conviction, however, that our Lord came to fulfil, not to abolish, was directly derived from his father's "Genius of Judaism."

remained independent and often the reverse of his own early associations. Byron, however, entered Disraeli's mental being through his father; and of three main influences on his boyhood—the Bible, Bolingbroke, and Byron (strange conjunction!), the last was not the least.

Outside politics, the contradictions combined in Disraeli's mind are patent throughout his fiction, and they were reconciled by his leading idea that everything great in the world springs from individuality alone. Thus, for example, as regards Destiny, he was both for free will and fatalism—the individual will was for him the universal fate. If a man, he has said, is ready to die for an object, he must attain it unless he has utterly miscalculated his powers. Then again, the twin sympathies of his mind, both with antique authority and modern revolution, its bias towards the Chartism of *Sybil*, the chivalry of her aristocratic deliverer, and the discipline of her time-honoured creed, towards the noble personality of "Theodora" in *Lothair* (his finest heroine),¹ and the noble ideals of "Coningsby"—these are reconciled by the national idea, the idea that sets earned privilege and reciprocal duties above and against illimitable and irresponsible "rights." "Conspiracies are for aristocrats, not for nations."

In this regard it is most interesting to observe the influence of Shelley on Disraeli—a subject which has been treated by Dr. Richard Garnett in a masterly monograph.² From many of his conclusions I dissent, but his facts are most enlightening, and form an entrancing comment on the character of "Herbert" in *Venetia*. He shows that probably through Trelawny, whom he met often at Lady Blessington's, Disraeli gleaned many recollections and even thoughts and words, unpublished till the Shelley Papers were given to the world some years afterwards; that his description too of the ethereal poet as "a golden phantom" is probably Trelawny's own; that subtle shades of admiring appreciation are to be traced

¹ I am informed, through the kindness of my friend Mr. George Russell, that the original of "Theodora" was one Madame Mario, née Jessie White.

² "Shelley and Lord Beaconsfield." Blackwood, 1881. For private circulation. Only twenty-five copies printed.

throughout ; that Disraeli was undoubtedly influenced by Shelley's thoughts. The discovery of these in some portions of the *Revolutionary Epick* (where "Demogorgon" is introduced) does not seem to me conclusive ; nor are the verbal resemblances singled out for comparison very striking. I cannot close this branch of my subject without noticing a fact almost unknown. In 1825, when Disraeli was a stripling, he published an anonymous pamphlet, which may be found in the British Museum, on the restrictions enforced by the Government upon the British working of American mines. The tract is boldly dedicated "by a sincere admirer" to Canning,¹ as "one who has reformed without bravery or scandal of former times or persons ; asking counsel of both times ; *of the ancient times that which is best, of the modern times, that which is fittest ;*" and it further contains this remarkable passage, if we remember its date, about America—

" . . . The prosperity of England mainly depends upon its relations with America, and in proportion as the energies of America are developed and her resources strengthened, will the power and prosperity of England be confirmed and increased."

In the domain of politics Disraeli, as I shall show at length, divined in the national institutions the chief engine for the revival of unity and for social regeneration. When he denounced the Conservatism of the early 'forties as an "organised hypocrisy," he did so just because, as it seemed to his eyes, the hopes once centred on Peel as the restorer of a truly "national" party were being shattered by his failure, under ordeal, to govern, to develop the institutions which he was called on to preserve, by his erection of "registration" into a party idol, by his policy of polls, by his cold indifference and suspicion of the youthful regenerators, who confronted the middle classes with the middle ages. "Whenever," indignantly urged Disraeli in 1845, "whenever the young men of England allude to any great principle of political or parliamentary conduct, are they to be recommended to go to a railway committee ?" And he found in his once chief's temperament of discouraging formality and timorous desire for "fixity of tenure," for *staying*

¹ Canning's ideas on variety of representation influenced Disraeli.

power, a reason for the stultification of the House of Lords : ". . . It is not Radicalism ; it is not the revolutionary spirit of the nineteenth century which has consigned 'another place' to illustrious insignificance ; it is 'Conservatism' and a Conservative dictator."

Disraeli was one born with aristocratic perceptions, yet with a bent "popular" rather than "democratic" in the strict sense of those terms. "Democracy" in the concrete he considered as the unsettlement of compact nationality through the undue preponderance of a single class ; democracy in the abstract he considered as a lever for ambitious tribunes. But the welfare of the people was ever his chief concern, and he knew full well that it is constantly foiled by the side-aims of those vociferous on its behalf. When he first appeared on the political horizon, neither of the great historical parties owned popular sympathies. The Tories dreaded "Radicalism" because they were blind to the possibilities of its adoption into the order of the State. Of the Whigs, democratic enthusiasms were at once the tools and the abhorrence. Disraeli determined to infuse them into those free yet settled institutions of which the Tories were the natural but forgetful guardians. His main purpose from the outset was to implant the new ideas of freedom on the ancient soil of order ; to engraft them productively without uprooting the native undergrowth ; to harmonise the modern democratic idea with those English traditions which had always harboured its older forms. His work was to accommodate federal to feudal principles ; to render democracy in England national and natural ; to popularise leadership ; to make democracy aristocratic in the truest sense of the term ; to undo the closed aristocracy of caste and to revive the open aristocracy of excellence wherever displayed. My next two chapters investigate this idea ; and it will be found afterwards, when I discuss his notion of empire and his attitude towards our colonies, that his ideals of Great Britain's destiny and responsibility flow straight from this ruling outlook. The same consideration applies to the many other problems which I shall discuss in the light of Disraeli's relations to them. Throughout, in one form or another, and in many

applications, the free play of responsible individuality forms the keynote. He constantly opposes it alike to the barren uniformity of republican models, and to the centralising dictatorship whether of groups or of tyrants. He contrasts the personal with the mechanical. The State in his eyes should prove the sympathetic expression of the whole community. These aspects will find ample exposition hereafter. In this place I wish only to quote their bold and broad emphasis in the unfamiliar pamphlet of *What is he?* with one citation from which I opened this chapter. It will explain those passages in his *Runnymede Letters* and *The Spirit of Whiggism*, where he expects and adjures Peel to head a "national party" and to replace confederacies by a creed. It will also illustrate that passage in the election address to High Wycombe during 1832, which preludes his mission as the renewer of a popular Conservatism. ". . . Englishmen, behold the unparalleled empire raised by the heroic energies of your fathers, rouse yourselves in this hour of doubt and danger, rid yourselves of all that political jargon and factious slang of Whig and Tory, two names with one meaning, used only to delude you, and unite in forming a great national party. . . ."

"The first object of a statesman," he says (and he was then barely twenty-nine years of age), "is a *strong Government*, without which there can be no security. Of all countries in the world, England most requires one, since the prosperity of no society so much depends upon public confidence as that of the British nation."

He then declares that the old principle of exclusion (common alike to the Whig oligarchs and the debased Toryism of Eldon) is dead.

". . . The moment the Lords passed the Reform Bill from menace instead of conviction, the aristocratic principle of government in this country, in my opinion, expired for ever." The democratic principle becomes necessary to maintain a Government at all. "If the Tories," he continues, "indeed despair of restoring the aristocratic principle, and are sincere in their avowal that the State cannot be governed with the present machinery, it is their duty to coalesce with

the Radicals,¹ and permit both political nicknames to merge into the common, the intelligible, and the dignified title of a national party.”²

He proceeds to prove in a few decisive strokes that the towns are now the safeguards against any military invasion of rights, and that a coalition between the then Whigs and the then Tories is impossible ; the only alternative, therefore, is the inclusion of the democratic principle.

“Without being a system-monger,” he resumes, repeating the refrain of his previous *Revolutionary Epick*, “I cannot but perceive that the history of Europe for three hundred years has been a transition from feudal to federal principles.” If not their origin, these contending principles have blended with all the struggles that have occurred.—“The revolt of the Netherlands impelled, if it did not produce, our revolution against Charles I. That of the Anglo-American colonies impelled, if it did not produce, the Revolution in France.” “This,” he says, “is not a party pamphlet, and appeals to the passions of no order of the State.” “It is wise,” he concludes, “to be sanguine in public as well as in private life ; yet the sagacious statesman must view the present portents with anxiety, if not with terror. It would sometimes appear that the loss of our colonial empire must be the necessary consequence of our prolonged domestic discussions. Hope, however, lingers to the last. In the sedate but vigorous character of the British nation we may place great confidence.” The very pressing unsettlement of those days will afterwards claim a mention ; nor should I now omit Disraeli’s sentence in his *Crisis Examined*, to the effect that “Lord Grey refusing the Privy Seal and Lord Brougham soliciting the

¹ It must be remembered that in 1833 the Radicals were a very small band, and differed vastly from their successors of the Manchester School. They were thoroughly discontented with the middle-class legislation of the Reform Bill, and they were violently opposed to the Whig pretensions to popular emancipation. Disraeli shared these feelings.

² It should be remembered that in the brilliant characterisation of Bolingbroke in Disraeli’s *Letter to Lord Lyndhurst*, he says, “that despite the Whig affectation of popular sympathies, and the Tory admiration of arbitrary power, Bolingbroke penetrated appearances, and perceived that the choice really lay ‘between oligarchy and democracy.’”

Chief Barony" were "two epigrammatic episodes in the history of reform that never can be forgotten."

Mr. John Morley has well observed that about all Disraeli's utterance there was something spacious. The ideas that I am about to examine are not to be brushed away by the sneers of triflers. Whatever may be thought of them, and however they may fairly be encountered by criticism, dissented from or condemned by judgment, they are still alive. Disraeli bathed the political landscape in a large and luminous atmosphere. To literature, as I shall hope to show, he lent a fresh and original charm. Over existence he never ceased to spread the glow of endeavour, of aspiration, and of purpose. His heart was with the youth and the labour of England. He made for the strength and union of every divergent class. He struck and stirred the national imagination.

Disraeli's sincerity was that of a master in the world's studio, imbuig the fainter shapes around him with the vivid colours of the true pictures in his own brain. It was that, also, of a great man of action who translates dreams into deeds. It is not often that the literary mind is allied to a practical bent. He himself has reminded us that such an union—"as in the case of Caius Julius"—is irresistible. He was always himself, and never under "the dangerous sympathy with the creations of others." He believed that "every man performs his office, and there is a Power, greater than ourselves, that disposes of all this."¹

Disraeli's European prominence is evidenced through the space occupied by the polyglot literature relating to him in the book catalogue alone of the British Museum. It extends to eleven of those huge pages. His importance at home before he became pre-eminent is shown by a shower of virulent abuse.

Science assures us that the difference between life and death is that the former holds the powers of growth and reproduction, while inanimateness is incapable of either. A great man is surely one who possesses and imparts these qualities of life. Disraeli, without question, powerfully affected the thought of his generation and the destinies of the future.

¹ A sentence from his appeal to Mr. Gladstone in 1859.

CHAPTER II

DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION

I WISH to head this chapter by a most striking passage hitherto unquoted. It occurs in the fourth of Disraeli's Letters to the Whigs, published in the first numbers of *The Press*—an organ founded by him in 1853 for the exposition of his views.¹ It unites the brilliance of his youth to the ripeness of his prime. It is a wonderful forecast of the future, and it embodies his ideas at a time when the "Coalition" alliance of Peelites, Whigs, and Manchester Radicals—one of "suspended opinions"—was entering on the career which closed so disastrously. In 1833, the "aristocratic" principle had been crippled. The problem now was how to bring the new democracy into line with an old monarchy—

" . . . I see before me a numerous and powerful party, animated by chiefs whose opinions in favour of all that can advance the cause of pure democracy have been openly proclaimed. Amongst that party no doubt there are some more moderate than others, some who march blindfold towards the goal which those of bolder vision see clear through the mists of faction. But all unite in the march of the caravan towards the heart of the desert ; and if there be those who then discover that the fountain which allures them on is but the mirage, it will be too late to return, and it will be destruction to pause. . . . If England is to retain that empire which she owes to no natural resources, but to the various influences of a most complicated and artificial, but most admirable and effective social

¹ *The Press*, June 11, 1853. The whole series is full of great strokes ; and there is also a critique on the dividing periods of English history, which is most bold and original.

system, *she must gather into one united phalanx all who hold the doctrine that England, to be safe, must be great. To continue free, she must rest upon the intermediate institutions that fence round monarchy, as the symbol of executive force, from that suffrage of unalloyed democracy which represents the invading agencies of legislative change.* Our system of policy must be opposed to all those who by rules of arithmetic would reduce the empire on which the sun never sets to the isle of the Anglo-Saxon, and leave our shores without defence against a yet craftier Norman. Our measures of reform must be so framed as to gain all the purposes of good government, yet to admit under the name of reform no agency that tends by its own inevitable laws to the explosion of the machinery whose operations you pretend it will economise and quicken.

"By what plausible arguments were the dwellers in the Piræus admitted to vote in the Athenian assembly? . . . Hence from that moment arose the dictator and the demagogue, . . . the flatterer and the tyrant of mobs; hence, the rapid fluctuations, the greedy enterprises, the dominion of the have-nots, the ruin of the fleet, the loss of the colonies, the thirty tyrants, the vain restoration of a hollow freedom . . . licence—corruption—servitude—dissolution. Give the popular assembly of Great Britain up to the *controlling* influence of the *lowest* voters in large towns, and you have brought again a Piræus to destroy your Athens."

We shall see ere the close how he foiled the schemes for representing the refuse of opinion.

A great statesman is a man inspired by great ideas; and, since all history is the visible and particular development of unseen and universal ideas, it must happen that a great statesman versed in experience and intuition forecasts and foreknows. For the prophet is the inverted historian or philosopher: he descries the currents ahead which the other analyses in retrospect. "To be wise before the event," urged Disraeli more than once, "is statesmanship of the highest order."

Throughout the preceding century two broad aspects of

politics, that is to say of applied national energy, present themselves in England. They were and remain divergent, but they are and remain mutually instructive and indispensable.

The one regards our kingdom as an elastic society, the outcome of native habits expressing national temperament ; as a soil of distinctive character and capacity, to which new plants, if destined to flourish, must be acclimatised, but on to which, or against which, they must never be forced.

The other—the “philosophic” school—regards the soil as a mere medium to be exhaustively manured by chemical processes for the introduction of growths of every origin, as a sort of “subtropical garden.” It perceives an idea suitable to other communities or other conjunctures, and immediately hastens to transplant it. In like manner it perceives an institution suitable to the race and temper of England, but unsuitable to some alien race and temper. It is at once for forcible adoption. It prefers the rigid logic of abstract notions to the flexibilities of human nature. Its attitude is mechanical instead of being sympathetic.

The one is in its essence national ; the other, if we reflect, international. The aim of the one is the evolution of individuality embodied in a nation ; that of the other, the ultimate effacement of nations, and their replacement by cosmopolitanism.

These are the logical issues of each system. With the former Burke identified himself, when he recoiled from following his party into the anti-national abstractions of the French Revolution. With the latter Mr. Gladstone identified himself, when he broke loose from the national idea, and advocated the “right” of every small community to “govern” itself. The one depends on popular privileges and class responsibilities evenly distributed—the outcome of national treaty and compromise, the tact born of struggle, not of upheaval. The other hinges on inherent “rights,” which are infinite, ubiquitous, abstract, and indefinite.

Of the former, from first to last, Disraeli, like Canning before him, was a fearless exponent. “Change,” he said in his famous Edinburgh speech of 1867, “is inevitable, but the point is whether that change shall be caused only in deference

to the manners, the customs, the laws, the traditions of the people, or whether it shall be carried in deference to abstract principles and arbitrary and general doctrines. . . . The national system, although it may occasionally represent the prejudices of a nation, never injures the national character, while the philosophic system, though it may occasionally improve . . . the condition of the country, precipitates progress, may occasion revolution and destroy states. . . ." His attitude to the repeal of the Corn Laws depended, as I shall prove in another chapter, on this dominant idea. It is in close connection with that idea of personality which I have already characterised, for nationality is itself the ideal personality which combines races in communion. It is also in close connection with that mode of government which seeks salvation from society and not from the State ; and it is bound up with all the characteristics that distinguish a "nation" from a "people." Disraeli's achievement was to adjust the spirit of England to the spirit of the age.

Our two parties are, after all, only the strategical forces in the big campaign of ideas. Without great generals they constantly tend to forget the issues which nominally enlist them.

At the period when Disraeli first stood on the hustings, "Reform" had been forced on the Whigs by the "Radicals," just as "Repeal" was to be forced some twelve years later on the Conservatives by the Cobdenites. To be a "Radical" committed one to neither of the legitimate camps. The Whigs had entered on their kingdom after long years of hopeless exclusion. They were bent on engrossing office, and none detested the new-fangled doctrines more than Lord Grey. Disraeli's purpose from the very first was to widen and popularise Toryism, but never to maintain the exclusive system of the Whigs in power by the popular machinery to which they so often resorted. In a purged and quickened Conservatism lurked irresistible possibilities, true benefit to the nation and empire at large, and a golden occasion for himself.

I think that if the oil could have blent with the vinegar, if Peel could ever have coalesced with Lord John Russell, Disraeli would have had less chance in politics, and must have been thrown back on literature.

His consistency stands out prominent in review. It is one of ideas. It is only by dint of long retrospect over a whole career that we can decide in the case of any statesman whether he has controlled his phases, or drifted with them.

From the first Disraeli compassed his reconciliation of new ideas with ancient institutions on definite principles, at once national and constructive, as opposed to destructive and international theories. He desired it through engraftment, not uprootal; through the defence and development of a constitution which is, in fact, the British *character* expressed by the modulations of the national voice, and not by the shouts of mechanical majorities. He wished in every case to preserve its efficiency by strengthening its tone and enlarging its vents; while, in the process, he displayed an insight into the instincts of classes which the conversance of genius with ideas can alone empower. Of modern, of cosmopolitan "Liberalism," he said, as late as 1872, that its drift and spirit were "to attack the institutions of the country under the name of reform, and to make war on the manners and customs of the people of this country under the pretext of progress."

What then were the "new ideas" and the "old institutions"?

That form of government which is most national will be best, because the least liable to sudden and social revolutions; and that form will be most national which is most genuinely representative; while true representation is one of power distributed, not centred. It follows that any Government that does not mirror the nation will break down. This was the real meaning of the French Revolution.

"... 'You will observe one curious trait,' said Sidonia to Coningsby, 'in the history of this country—the depository of power is always unpopular. As we see that the Barons, the Church, and the King have in turn devoured each other, and that the Parliament, the last devourer, remains, it is impossible to resist the impression that this body also is doomed to be destroyed.'—'Where then would you look for hope?'—'In what is more powerful than laws and institutions, and without which the best laws and the most skilful institutions may be a dead letter and the very means of tyranny, in the

national character. It is not in the increased feebleness of its institutions that I see the peril of England ; it is in the decline of its character as a community. . . . You may have a corrupt Government and a pure community ; you may have a corrupt community and a pure Administration. Which would you elect ?'—'Neither,' said Coningsby, 'I wish to see a people full of faith, and a Government full of duty.'"

Are the modern ideas of untempered democracy—Carlyle's "despair of finding any heroes to govern you"—compatible with real representation, as contrasted with the mechanism of elective systems or the shams of paper constitutions ? Can these ideas ever prove expressive of true nationality—the *character* of a united people—as opposed to the conflicting instincts of unreconciled races, or the factious claims of divergent groups ? Is not the mechanical subordination to the "State" of Socialism hostile to an individual "nationality" ? How, in the ferment of modern progress, can the new wine be prevented from bursting the old bottles ? How can government and free action, independence and inter-dependence, be allied in living reality ? How can opinion be organised into allegiance to leadership ? How can traditions be rendered less formal ? How can discipline and development, authority and elasticity, combine ? How can the machinery of national custom be brought into real accord with popular aspirations, and the mainstay of character with the modern speed of movement ? "Certainly," as Carlyle insisted, "it is the hugest question ever heretofore propounded to mankind."

In the proem to the *Revolutionary Epick*, Disraeli says that the French Revolution marks the greatest political crisis since the Siege of Troy. The paroxysm of that Revolution produced two hollow fictions, the "Rights of Man" and "the Sovereignty of the People."

Before illustrating the train of Disraeli's ideas, let me touch on these two doctrines.

The Rights of Man. What is the real meaning of a dogma which annihilates the duties of citizens in declaring the licence of their "rights ;" in affirming personal claims as

distinguished from popular or legal privileges ; in destroying the community by exalting the person ?

It was based on Rousseau's figment of a "Return to Nature."

All "Returns to Nature" are, if we reflect, a harking back to chaos, a denial of the whole self-developing social state which God has ordained for man. They are the protests of instinct against order, of "the People" against "the Nation," of isolation against fusion, of "naturalism" against "spiritualism." One way or the other, they signify relapses into brute force and animal conflict.

Rousseau's "Return" was a *sentimental* one, for sentimentality often attends materialism. The best side of Rousseau was that he did undoubtedly leaven the irreverence of his generation with some feeling for God. But Rousseau invented a past on which he founded his hopefulness of sensibility—an inverted optimism. He cried aloud in hysterics, "Man is born free ; everywhere he is in chains." To what freedom was man born ? The freedom of confusion. The order that he evolves is the parent of his true freedom—the freedom to work and serve, and to receive justice. The real "Rights of Man" are the rights to justice that order creates. And if that order belies its name, and injustice, disorder, masquerade as divine government, why then Fifth Monarchy men, French Revolutions, ruining cataclysm, witness to the heavenly destinies, and order is born once more. Rousseau's sobs resembled those of the hero of French melodrama, who under stage moonshine and stage misfortune, always ejaculates, "Ma mère !" His mere emotion worked on nerves of sterner fibre and facts of harder quality.

Since Disraeli's death, Nietzsche has propounded a physical "Return to Nature," which, however, excludes the humanitarian side of the French "Equality." He has sighed for a gigantic brood of antediluvian anarchs. He has tried to make anarchy heroic. But a monster is not even a man, still less a hero.

All such systems must fail, because, as Disraeli has finely said, "Man is born to adore and to obey." They contradict

the spiritual facts of our structure. For the true Right of Man is to lead wisely and be led loyally in public affairs ; neither to steal nor be stolen from in private. These are what Carlyle terms his "correctly articulated *mights*." Leadership, loyalty, and social honesty belong to no "state of nature" of which record or even guess is possible. And Disraeli agreed with Carlyle when the latter wrote, after the former had in effect said the same: ". . . 'Supply and demand' we will honour also ; and yet how many 'demands' are there, entirely indispensable, which have to go elsewhere than to the shops !"

But Nietzsche's theories are luckily untranslatable into action, and inconsistent with any form of the "state." Rousseau's theories, on the other hand, are the more dangerous because they are feasible. The "Rights of Man" is a doctrine absolutely at issue with the "Rights of Nations." The abstract notion of universal "rights" is also at variance with the pressing impulses of physical "wants." Low wages and long hours are not redressed by the apparatus of ballot-boxes or the cant of independence. Physical needs due to economical causes, which can be modified only by the earnest statesmanship of leaders rising to their responsibilities, are not to be dismissed by the vague generalities of "moral force." This aspect is powerfully emphasised in *Sybil*.

". . . Add to all these causes of suffering and discontent among the workmen the apprehension of still greater evils, and the tyranny of the 'butties,' or middlemen, and it will with little difficulty be felt that the public mind of this district was well prepared for the excitement of the political agitator, especially if he were discreet enough rather to descant on their physical sufferings and personal injuries, than to attempt the propagation of abstract political principles with which it was impossible for them to sympathise. . . . It generally happens, however, that where a mere physical impulse urges the people to insurrection, though it is often an influence of slow growth and movement, the effects are more violent and sometimes more obstinate than when they move under the blended authority of moral and physical necessity, and mix up together the rights and the wants of man."

The pendant to the "rights" is the "*equality*" of man. Here, again, nothing is more self-evident than man's natural inequality. The whole development of societies, which we call civilisation, is for the very purpose of redressing or relieving these inequalities of occasion, of equipment. By nature man, like the brute, starts without equality and without rights. By his "might" he has created these ideas, and acquired something of their substance by his superior faculties, by the spiritual energy which differentiates him. His "rights" spring from the "law" which he has propagated. The political equality which he has founded more than compensates him for the personal inequality of his beginnings. The "personal equation," indeed, would imply the reversal both of his nature and of his craftsmanship ; of all conditions, moreover, compatible with variety of character and freedom of action. It means, in fact, a denial of the existence of that natural aristocracy which we find in every class and every order, and which decides that everywhere the game of "follow my leader" must be played. What is wanted is a real aristocracy which "claims great privileges for great purposes." What is always dangerous is the monopoly of action by an aristocracy that shirks its duties, that plays at government, that is dilettante in leadership or sybarite in life ; or that, as in the three decades preceding the French Revolution, revenges its exclusion from influence by multiplying sinecures. It is such a class, as contrasted with individuals—wherever found—of genuine capacities, that so often evoked Disraeli's irony, and has lately been satirised by Mr. Barrie in a whimsy accentuating the natural inequality of man. Speaking through the lips of "Egremont," in that fine passage where he cheers "Sybil"—the noble daughter of the people, disappointed by the Charter and the Chartists—with a vista of the future, Disraeli says : "The mind of England is the mind ever of the rising race. Trust me it is with the People. . . . Predominant opinions are generally the opinions of the generation that is vanishing. . . . It will be a product hostile to the oligarchical system. The future principle of English politics will not be a levelling principle ; not a principle adverse to privileges, but favourable to their extension.

It will seek to ensure equality, not by levelling the few, but by elevating the many." And again, the great manufacturer, "Millbank," in *Coningsby*, is made to remark (after giving distinction as the basis of aristocracy), "that 'natural aristocracy' ought to be found . . . among those men whom a nation recognises as the most eminent for virtue, talents, and property, and, if you please, birth and standing in the land. They guide opinion, and therefore they govern. I am no leveller. I look upon an artificial equality as equally pernicious with a factitious aristocracy; both depressing and checking the enterprise of a nation. I like man to be free—really free; free in his industry as well as his body. . . ." As Carlyle puts it: ". . . I say you did not make the land of England; and by the possession of it you are bound to furnish guidance and government to England. . . ."—"A high class without duties to do is like a tree planted on precipices."¹

It should not be forgotten, and I shall afterwards illustrate, that in these and many other respects Carlyle's teaching chimes with Disraeli's. ". . . That speciosities which are not realities can no longer be. . . . What is an aristocracy? A corporation of the best, of the bravest. . . . Whatsoever aristocracy does not even attempt to be that, but only to wear the clothes of that, is not safe; neither is the land it rules in safe. . . . We must find a real aristocracy. . . ." And so with priesthood.

In "Angela Pisani"—a dazzling dream-picture of three generations in France—by Disraeli's early intimate, Lord Strangford, occurs a striking outburst against natural equality, that solecism in ideas, that remainder biscuit of the French Revolution.

". . . Go and preach equality to the deep seas, . . . that the oyster is equal to the whale or the starfish to the shark; you will succeed there sooner than you will be able to alter the relative grades of the five races of humanity. It is a *law* which man must unmake himself, ere he can change, that the Caucasian will aspire as the highest, and the negro will grovel as the basest." Disraeli's attitude was the same in *Contarini Fleming*:—

¹ *Vide* "Chartism," p. 35.

" . . . The law that regulates man must be founded on a knowledge of his nature, or that law leads him to ruin. What is the nature of man? In every clime and every creed we shall find a new definition. . . . What then? Is the German a different animal from the Italian? Let me inquire in turn whether you conceive the negro of the Gold Coast to be the same being as the Esquimaux who tracks his way over the Polar snows? The most successful legislators are those who have consulted the genius of the people. . . . One thing is quite certain, that the system we have pursued to attain a knowledge of man has entirely failed. . . ."

Although "Equality" ignores alike the instinct and the clue of "race," it asserts in practice the pandemonium of race-warfare; because in imagining that man is born equipped, it ignores his great acquirement of "nationality," which blends the reconcilables of "race" into one ideal whole—a league of common traditions, language, habits, institutions, duties, and privileges—of "solidarity"—without the bond of blood or the necessity for bloodshed. Nationality thus brings the specific qualities of races into the common stock. Disraeli has often harped on the theme that a "nation" is no "aggregate of atoms," but a corporate individuality; and indeed the force of individuality lies at the root of all his conceptions. But in truth the whole fiction of "natural equality" springs from a sort of native envy. As Goethe sings—

" Men stick at reaching what is great,
Yet only grudge an equal state.
To deem your equals all you know—
No envy worse the world can show."

Crises, according to him in 1833, were determined by causes far other than these figments of "natural" laws—

" . . . When I examine the state of European society with the unimpassioned spirit which the philosopher can alone command, I perceive that it is in a state of transition—one from feudal to federal principles. This I conceive to be the sole and secret cause of all the convulsions that have occurred and are to occur."¹

¹ *Contarini Fleming*. For a like passage of about the same date, cf. *ante*, p. 48.

All this has proved, and is proving true. The civil and legal "equality" of united nationality and of unifying empire is replacing the material "equality" of classes or of individuals.

"Natural" equality means "physical" equality, which was the true gist of the many cries of the French Revolution. But its hurricane swept away classes and privilege alone; the "equality" it created, that is to say, was social and civil. Of civil "equality" Disraeli was always the spokesman; for in England, civil equality means abolition of monopolies. Privilege, as the ennobling boon of merit, stands open to all, and the limits of the political orders or social classes to which it is attached, are corrected by the wide freedom of public opinion and discussion. "I hold that civil equality," said Disraeli at Glasgow in 1873, "the equality of all subjects before the law, and a law which recognises the personal rights of all subjects, is the only foundation of a perfect commonwealth." His most striking utterances in *The Press* from 1853 to 1859, and this Glasgow address, are perhaps his most notable commentaries on this theme.

These are no mere subtleties. "Physical equality" has exercised a very practical bearing on the doctrines of the Manchester School and their relations to Sir Robert Peel's double reform, above all to those interests of Labour which both affected. I shall show this in my next chapter.¹ Suffice it now to say that Disraeli descried that in adopting the "Right to physical happiness" doctrine of Manchester, at the very moment when he unshackled commerce and undid the Corn Laws, Peel had adopted a principle which logically demands an "unlimited employment of labour"—a thing inconsistent at once with his restriction of Labour by removing the restraints on competition, and, as Disraeli thought, with the very existence of states and of nations. Peel thus became unconsciously *cosmopolitan*, at the very juncture when he settled commerce and unsettled labour—

"The leading principle of this new school," explained Disraeli, treating of "equality" in 1873, "is that there is no happiness which is not material, and that every living being has a right to share in that physical welfare. The first

¹ And cf. *post* at the opening of Chapter VI.

obstacle to their purpose is found in the rights of private property. Therefore these must be abolished. But the social system must be established on some principle, and therefore for the rights of property they would *substitute* the rights of Labour. Now these cannot fully be enjoyed, *if there be any limit to employment. The great limit to employment, to the rights of Labour, and to the physical and material equality of man is found in the division of the world into states and nations.* Thus, as civil equality would abolish privilege, social equality would destroy classes, so material and physical equality strikes at the principle of patriotism, and is prepared to abrogate countries."

It was just this perception that enabled Disraeli nearly thirty years earlier to predict—as we shall see—so much that has come and is coming to pass.

The third cry of the French Revolution was *Human Brotherhood*. The Christian ideal of inter-nationality, which, it is to be hoped, may ultimately be realised through the Brotherhood of Nations, is the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God. But the fraternity of revolution eliminated both the Brotherhood of Nations and the Fatherhood of God. The result was a murderous anarchy—a Brotherhood of Cain.

Such disorders compelled their own cure in their own country. Although they flooded Europe with opinions at war with beliefs, and upheld a cosmopolitan model, they brought the French a deliverer who declined into a despot. Personality avenged herself. And the eventual remedy for Napoleonism has in its turn been found in a Republic which, discarding the sovereignty of man, has also discarded the sovereignty of God.

The effects of such a government are best perceived in two recent and remarkable books, M. Demolin's "*À quoi tient la Supériorité des Anglo-Saxons,*" and M. Cerfberr's "*Essai sur le Mouvement Social et Intellectuel en France depuis 1789.*" The perpetual preponderance of the bourgeoisie has raised a bureaucracy. The Charter of the Revolution has culminated in middle-class officialism. The over-centralisation of government by a few groups, who do not represent the varied

elements of a great nation, has caused a dearth of individual initiative, a lack of personal self-reliance and social free-play, a tendency towards the withering dictatorship of state-socialism, which underlies the unfitness of France for colonisation, and which both these acute thinkers depict and deplore ; while the late Professor Mommsen, commenting on Cæsar's union of Democracy with Empire, employs the same arguments.

That state which best represents national character enjoys the freest play of institutions, favours the finest shape of spirit, public and private, will wield the most formative influence among nations, expand the most easily, and propagate itself by expansion. And the state which best embodies the national will, is where the legislature is in keenest touch with the executive, where institutions are organic, where representation is popular, and where centralisation is foreign to the national genius. This has, unfortunately, never been realised in France. She was centralised to an amazing degree long before her memorable outburst ; and De Tocqueville has well shown that her attempts to unite judicial with legislative functions were the surest signs of her lack of "solidarity." Her great upheaval was predicted by Bolingbroke more than forty years before it occurred, just because he discerned that her ancient constitution ignored a popular representation. De Tocqueville himself, too, only proves that the aristocratic centralisation of old France has been replaced by the collectivist centralisation of its new democracy. Both in spirit are the same. Centralisation, whatever its forms, precludes the fair and free distribution of activities. It hoards and absorbs the national character. These are its original sins. But Disraeli has also pointed out that, for many reasons, France remains the sole ancient country that can afford to begin again.

So much for the "Rights of Man." One word still on "the Sovereignty of the People."

"A people," said Disraeli, as early as 1836, in his *Spirit of Whiggism*, "is a species ; a civilised community is a nation. Now a nation is a work of art and a work of time. A nation is gradually created by a variety of influences. . . . These influences create the nation—these form the national mind.

. . . If you destroy the political institutions which these influences have called into force, and which are the machinery by which they constantly act, you destroy the nation. The nation, in a state of anarchy and dissolution, then becomes a people; and after experiencing all the consequent misery, like a company of bees spoiled of their queen and rifled of their hive, they set to again and establish themselves into a society. . . ."

"The People" is a phrase of physiology, not of politics. It is an abstruse name for a multitude; it ignores temperament and will. Stripped of its high sound, its "Sovereignty" means government by miscellany, the censorship of the census. Its political bearings are as purely arithmetical as are the corresponding ethical bearings of the Utilitarian creed; for they both disregard the many-sided nature of man. Although derived from the speculations of some late seventeenth-century republicans in England, the French application of the theory—Burke's "Wisdom told by the Head"—was entirely new. It was not republicanism, the government by qualified members of ordered classes: it was a despotism by the crowd as crowd. Such a "Democracy" has never been the permanent scheme of government in any nation, although "Liberal opinion" has relied too often on its simplicity. "One man, one vote," quantity instead of quality is in truth no principle at all; and this attempt to confuse the Book of Wisdom with the Book of Numbers is a feat reserved for modern periods alone. All earlier systems of democracy were more or less discriminate, for no indiscriminate state can cohere, and both freedom and order are based on discrimination. The Attic Democracy demanded a degraded class of unleisured, unemancipated slaves. The American Republic, which has freed serfs and abolished leisure, possesses a peculiar stability, which will outwear its occasional corruption because it exists through a landed democracy—one impossible in overcrowded Europe—as we shall find Disraeli emphasising in my American chapter.

In a word, the logical outcome of the "Sovereignty of the People" is the tyranny of plebiscite. But a "plebiscite" dispenses with the very principle of representation, for where

all decide equally, why should any be represented? Political power exercisable by *all* can only arise when all are sufficiently qualified. But it is always the *some*, never the *all*, who are competent. Even in their proper sphere of merely personal choice, how false and fatal most plebiscites have proved!—"Not this man, but Barabbas."

Vox populi is only *vox Dei* through the gradual institutions that nations create; not through the wayward moods and momentary clamours of "the people." The whole problem is how at once to range and to raise public opinion—the popular conscience; how to preserve moral, without retarding material, progress; how to inspire "progress" itself with the conviction that it consists in following the highest leadership; how, again, to ensure such leadership by the constant association of duty with privilege, and responsibility with power; how to recruit it by every means that the spread of enlightenment can furnish.

"On man alone the fate of man is placed,"

sang Disraeli, in the *Revolutionary Epick*; and of "opinion"—

"Physical strength and moral were united,
And I, the pledge of their true love was born."

But for this purpose the national imagination must be reckoned with. ". . . When that faculty is astir in a nation," he has insisted, "it will sacrifice even physical comfort to follow its impulses." The struggle will always continue for national unity, but it takes generations to perceive that colonial federation, for example, is as requisite a means to this idea as native institutions representing real elements. ". . . A political institution is a machine; the motive power is the national character," says "Sidonia;" "Society in this country is perplexed, almost paralysed. How are the elements of the nation to be again blended together? In what spirit is that reorganisation to take place? . . ."

And again, so late as 1870, in the preface to *Lothair*, summarising his works, Disraeli observes: ". . . National institutions were the ramparts of the multitude against large estates exercising political power derived from a limited class.

The Church was in theory—and once it had been in practice—the spiritual and intellectual trainer of the people. The privileges of the multitude and the prerogatives of the sovereign had grown up together, and together they had waned. Under the plea of Liberalism, all the institutions which were the bulwarks of the multitude had been sapped and weakened, and nothing had been substituted for them. The people were without education, and, relatively to the advance of science and the comfort of the superior classes, their condition had deteriorated, and their physical quality as a race was threatened. . . .”

On the other hand, the incongruity of modern political machinery was never far from Disraeli's thoughts. “. . . Whatever may have been the faults of the ancient governments,” he muses in *Contarini Fleming*, “they were in closer relation to the times, the countries, and to the governed, than ours. The ancients invented their governments according to their wants. The moderns have adopted foreign policies, and then modelled their conduct upon this borrowed regulation. This circumstance has occasioned our manners and our customs to be so confused and absurd and unphilosophical. . . . He who profoundly meditates upon the situation of modern Europe, will also discover how productive of misery has been the senseless adoption of Oriental customs by Northern peoples. . . .” And Disraeli also distinguished between the direct democracy of multitude and that of “popular” institutions.

Nothing is less truly “popular” than “the people” as a “democracy,” for the despotism of many is as odious as the arbitrary will of one, and even more fatal than the government by groups of the few. This is the distinction on which he expatiated in a famous speech of 1847 at Aylesbury, where he contrasted “popular principles” with “Liberal opinions”—

“As it is not the interest of the rich and the powerful to pursue popular principles of government, the wisdom of great men and the experience of ages have taken care that these principles should be cherished and perpetuated in the form of institutions. Thus the majesty that guards the multitude is embodied in a throne; the faith that consoles them hovers

round the altar of a national Church; the spirit of discussion, which is the root of public liberty, flourishes in the atmosphere of a free Parliament."

These, in the rough, are some of Disraeli's ideas as to the new democracy. From the first, as we shall see, he compassed the renewal of the English democratic idea—that of democracy as an *element*—in opposition alike to the State tutelage of the French, and to that form of democracy which means the undue power of one *class* in the nation. His Reform Bill of 1867 was the accomplishment of his earliest hopes, and the realisation of principles distinct from the spasms of doctrinaire "Liberalism."

He regarded our Constitution—the quintessence of the English character immanent in English institutions—as a real though limited monarchy, tempered by a democracy which is in effect neither more nor less than *a natural aristocracy*.

"Aristocracy," as a universal principle and not the badge of a particular class, is the committal of political privilege far more to representative influence than to powerful interests. A "natural" aristocracy must comprehend and absorb the superiors of every class in all their varieties.

"The Monarchy of the Tories," Disraeli exclaimed in his youth,¹ "is more democratic than the Republic of the Whigs." "The House of Commons," he exclaimed many years later, "is a more aristocratic body than the House of Lords." In each House, through all its pronouncements, he recognised that the democratic element is aristocratic, the aristocratic element democratic. That the representative assembly of the Commons, which is elected, should include all that is best from each class which by its qualities has earned the boon of the franchise; that the representative assembly, which is not elected, should include more and more not only those whose aggrandisement stands for the interests of property, but those too whose intellect and attainments entitle them to distinction. Nor, of course, can the fact be ignored that through hereditary honours the Estate of the Commons, which constantly reinforces the Estate of the Peers, is, in its turn, as constantly refreshed from the Estate of

¹ *The Spirit of Whiggism.*

the Peers. And from first to last, in theory, as well as in action, he upheld the land as the deepest foundation of England's greatness of character. I could quote passage after passage, both from books and speeches, and regarding subjects the most various, in which he presses home the substantial importance of a territorial constitution, and the fact that the landed interest is in truth not only a safeguard for freedom in peace and vigour in war, but also an industrial interest of the highest order; and doubly so, because by sentiment, by tradition, by its contribution to local government, to stability, to the social scale of duties conditioning the tenure of property, to physique, its influence is essential and exceptional. I shall content myself with a citation from a speech of 1860, and it may be remembered that the acute De Tocqueville singles out the self-seclusion of the official bourgeoisie from the land as a chief contributory to the French Revolution—

“ . . . I look round upon Europe at the present moment, and I see no country of any importance in which political liberty can be said to exist. I attribute the creation and maintenance of our liberties to the influence of the land, and to our tenure of land. In England there are large properties round which men can rally, *and that in my mind forms the only security in an old European country against that centralised form of government which has prevailed, and must prevail, in every European country where there is no such counterpoise.* It is our tenure of land to which we are indebted for our public liberties, because it is the tenure of land which makes local government a fact in England, and which allows the great body of Englishmen to be ruled by traditionary influence and by habit, instead of being governed, as in other countries, by mere police.”

Disraeli was always staunch to the land. After the Corn Law repeal, he strove pertinaciously till he succeeded in removing those especial burdens which unfairly hampered their free competition, and which were originally the price of peculiar privileges then removed. But though he always desired a preponderance of the various landed interests, he never wished for their predominance. And to the last he

refused to allow any spurious cry for especial measures on their behalf to be raised when a temporary depression due to the seasons arose, which he always distinguished from permanent causes connected with social revolutions.¹

To develop our ancient institutions was his lifelong specific. From his earliest pronouncements, those in the *Letter to Lord Lyndhurst*, those in *What is he?* and in *Gallomania*, those in the *Spirit of Whiggism*, those in his first election speeches, extending over a period of five years before he was returned, in his three first political novels, to his latest orations on Conservatism as a "national" cause, he laid the greatest stress on the function and origin of the three co-ordinate Estates of the Realm—"popular classes established into political orders"²—which under monarchy form our Constitution. And, while to the end he praised that mighty force of public opinion which has in the person of the Press almost divested Parliament of its ancestral office as "the grand inquest" of national grievances, he still held the "organisation of opinion" to remain the essence of the party system; while he increasingly desired the presence in Parliament of elements at once various and choice,³ and the absence from its councils of any preponderant sects or sections. Like Burke, he believed that Parliament should be under every changing phase of national development "the express image of the feelings of the nation;" like Bolingbroke, he deemed that it should be also the collective assemblage of its wisdom. He regarded these "estates" as the embodiment of great national interests organised on the principle of distinct duties

¹ Cf. his fine speech on "Agricultural Distress," April 29, 1879. He urged the same, almost in the same words, on February 17, 1863.

² Letter to Lord Lyndhurst. So, too, in his early *Spirit of Whiggism*. In a speech of 1865 he defines an Estate as "a political body invested with political power for the government of the country and for the public good," and "therefore a body founded upon *privilege* and not upon *right*," and "in the noblest and properest sense of the term an *aristocratic* body." Under the Plantagenets it was at one time mooted whether the *Law* should not be raised into such an "Estate." He says the same in a letter of explanation to Lord Malmesbury.

³ "Our constituent body should be *numerous* enough to be independent, and *select* enough to be responsible." In 1865 he distinguished between the constitution, absorbing the best from each class, and a "democracy"—"the tyranny of one class."

conditioning privilege ; and he desired that, however modified, they should never be altered so as to impair the great national institutions as whose buttresses they were built to serve.

Looking back historically, he discerned that some hundred and twenty years before the birth of English Liberalism, a country and "Old England" party, perplexed by dynastic and economic problems, confronted too by the semi-scientific rationalism of a new age, had been first schooled into comprehensive, generous, and "national" aspirations by a great but lost leader, and had then been baffled by a set of great families. Most of these began by professing Republican principles, and all of them were branded in the literature of Queen Anne as the "Venetian oligarchy." These families aimed steadily for more than a century at engrossing the whole power of the State. Their bias from 1700 to Sunderland's peerage bill in 1718, and from 1718 to the Reform Bill of 1831 remained Republican. But so long as a king was content to be a puppet dancing on their wires, and the nation to be cowed into lethargy, they could dispense with theoretical forms, mainly upheld as a ladder towards oligarchical power. From time to time they assumed popular causes, but somehow they never succeeded in themselves being popular, because their chief object as a party organisation was "the establishment of an oligarchical government by virtue of a Republican cry ;"¹ because, as Disraeli has again shown, English revolutions have always been in favour of privilege traditionally distributed, while foreign revolutions have been against all privilege whatever ; because the "New Whigs" of Queen Anne and the first two Georges sought a *tabula rasa*—a plain map, as opposed to the picture with perspective of English institutions. They were theoretically for "liberty and property"—the "*New Whig*" catchword of Queen Anne's reign that replaced the old one of "Liberty" alone, in which both Whigs and Tories joined at the revolution—but their bias was always more for property than for liberty. They sought to amass money and power through the amassing classes. They never studied the varied interests of the whole nation. Walpole usurped their place, but retained

¹ *Runnymede Letters*.

their influence, and by his virtue George I. reigned rather than ruled over the towns instead of over the country. At first these oligarchs kicked against the growing management of a sole minister, but the shrewd steadiness of a superior will overmastered them, and Newcastle remained on Walpole's side—the insignificant representative of their tamed confederacy. Trade ceased to follow the land, but tended more and more to acquire it by purchase, until a fresh moneyed oligarchy, which acquired fresh titles, was formed. The great Chatham broke it for a time; and afterwards George III. obstinately mutinied against its shackles. The French overthrow transformed the Whig cry of Republicanism to the Whig cry of Jacobinism. “. . . Between the advent of Mr. Pitt and the resurrection of Lord Grey, . . . ever on the watch for a cry to carry them into power, they mistook the yell of Jacobinism for the chorus of an emancipated people, and fancied, in order to take the throne by storm, that nothing was wanting but to hoist the tricolour and to cover their haughty brows with a red cap. This fatal blunder clipped the wings of Whiggism; nor is it possible to conceive a party that had effected so many revolutions and governed a great country for so long a period more broken, sunk, and shattered, more desolate and disheartened, than these same Whigs at the Peace of Paris.” But all proved fruitless, until at last the vast body of the nation—the real “people”—reasserted themselves, and, by emphasising Parliamentary reform, compelled oligarchs, mistrustful of them at heart,¹ to “do something.” What they “did” was to aggrandise the middle classes, on whom they had always relied; and a new revolution was the consequence. Throughout more than a century and a half, despite noble and national intervals, they constantly betrayed themselves as a “faction who headed a revolution with which they did not sympathise, in order to possess themselves of a power which they cannot wield.” In 1718 they “sought to govern the country by swamping the House of Commons.” In 1836 they were for

¹ In 1733 Walpole objected to the repeal of the Septennial Act precisely on the grounds that it would involve over-confidence in the people, and democratise England.

"swamping" the House of Lords. Their drift was continued against the national institutions, the conjoined independence and inter-dependence of which thwarted their inveteracy. Their plan in the end became avowedly cosmopolitan; and when that occurred it became doubly dangerous, for to "centralisation"—monopoly of power—was added the no-principle of "*laissez-faire*," the abandonment of leadership to chaos.

The great national struggle against Napoleon practically obliterated party distinctions in England, although there was still a remnant of those who are, in Burke's words: "... the most pernicious of all factions, one in the interest and under the direction of foreign powers." A lull ensued. Both Toryism and Whiggism withered; the first from sheer inanition of those popular principles which Canning in vain sought to rekindle; the second from the sheer impossibility of withstanding the name of Wellington and the memories of Waterloo. Toryism turned against freedom and Liberalism against order. Public spirit waned with the decay of party opposition. The great warriors dwindled into petty place-men until

"Where are the Grenvilles? Turned as usual. Where
My friends the Whigs? Exactly where they were;"

until the "Marney" of *Sybil* expired "in the full faith of dukeism and babbling of strawberry leaves."

"From that period till 1830," to resume my citations from his earliest pamphlets, "the tactics of the Whigs consisted in gently and gradually extricating themselves from their false position as the disciples of Jacobinism, and assuming their ancient post as the hereditary guardians of an hereditary monarchy." To ease the transition, they invented Liberalism, a bridge to regain the lost mainland, and recross on tiptoe the chasm over which they had sprung with so much precipitation. "A dozen years of 'Liberal principles' broke up the national party of England—cemented by half a century of prosperity and glory, compared with which all the annals of the realm are dim and lack-lustre. Yet so weak intrinsically was the oligarchical faction, that their chief, despairing to obtain a monopoly of power for his party, elaborately announced himself as the champion of his patrician order, and attempted to coalesce with the Liberalised leader of the Tories.

Had that negotiation not led to the result which was originally intended by those interested, the Riots of Paris would not have occasioned the Reform of London. It is a great delusion to believe that revolutions are ever effected by a nation. It is a faction, and generally a small one, that overthrows a dynasty or remodels a constitution. A small party, strong by long exile from power, and desperate of success except by desperate means, invariably has recourse to a *coup d'état*. . . . The rights and liberties of a nation can only be preserved by institutions. . . . Life is short, man is imaginative, our passions high. . . . Let us suppose our ancient monarchy abolished, our independent hierarchy reduced to a stipendiary sect, the gentlemen of England deprived of their magisterial functions, and metropolitan prefects and sub-prefects established in the counties and principal towns commanding a vigorous and vigilant police, and backed by an army under the immediate order of a single House of Parliament. . . . But where then will be the liberties of England? Who will dare disobey London? . . . When these merry times arrive—the times of extraordinary tribunals and extraordinary taxes . . . the phrase ‘Anti-Reformer’ will serve as well as that of ‘Malignant,’ and be as valid a plea as the former title for harassing and plundering those who venture to wince under the crowning mercies of centralisation. . . . I would address myself to the English Radicals. I do not mean those fine gentlemen or those vulgar adventurers who, in this age of quackery, may sail into Parliament by hoisting for the nonce the false colours of the movement; but I mean that honest and considerable party . . . who have a definite object which they distinctly avow. . . . Not merely that which is just, but that which is also practicable, should be the aim of a sagacious politician. Let the Radicals well consider whether in attempting to achieve their avowed object they are not, in fact, only assisting *the secret views of a party whose scheme is infinitely more adverse to their own than the existing system, whose genius I believe they entirely misapprehend.*” And after commenting on the “preponderance of a small class” under the new arrangement, the dangerous tendency towards centralisation and the perils of the reformed

municipal corporations, he thus concludes: "If there be a slight probability of ever establishing in this country a more democratic government than the English Constitution, it will be as well, I conceive, for those who love their rights, to maintain that constitution, and if the more recent measures of the Whigs, however plausible their first aspect, have in fact been a *departure from the democratic character of that constitution*, it will be as well for the English nation to oppose . . . the spirit of Whiggism."

No student of the Croker Papers can deny that some of the leading Whigs did in the period immediately succeeding the Reform Bill plot for a Republican purpose. No historian will deny that the Reform Bill, by the exclusion of "Labour" from the franchise, and its deprivation at the same time of the ancient rights which industry had possessed, left open a rankling sore. In this tract of 1836 Disraeli exposes the machination and probes the wound. Even thus early he feared the predominance of a plutocracy, "the supreme triumph of cash" at an era when, in Carlyle's phrase also, "Cash Payment" is fast becoming "the universal sole nexus of man to man;" while he determined, if ever he had the power, to redress the balance by including the labouring classes. In 1848 he had spoken in Parliament on these questions to the same effect as he had spoken on the hustings in 1833, even favouring, as he had then advocated, triennial parliaments, except [that under the later circumstances it might be an unnecessary change; and denouncing, as he had then denounced, "universal suffrage," and on the same grounds. In this remarkable speech he forecasted that signal settlement which nearly twenty years later he was to secure. I shall shortly connect many utterances of his, ranging over more than thirty years; but there are three passages from this declaration, made at a time before the re-modelling of the reforms of 1832 had been agreed upon as an open problem, which I ask leave to excerpt as a prelude, for they strike the very keynotes of his domestic policy. Disraeli pointed out that the Radical Hume was taking *property* as the basis of suffrage fully as much as the Whigs had done in 1832, and that the same *bourgeois* predominance would ensue.

" . . . Now, sir, for one I think property is sufficiently represented in this House. I am prepared to support the system of 1832 until I see that the circumstances and necessities of the country require a change ; *but I am convinced that when that change comes, it will be one that will have more regard for other sentiments, qualities, and conditions than the mere possession of property as a qualification for the exercise of the political franchise.*" And he then definitely protested against being ranked among those who accepted finality in that "wherein there has been, throughout the history of this ancient country, frequent and continuous change—the construction of this estate of the realm. I oppose this new scheme because it does not appear to be adapted in any way to satisfy the wants of the age, or to be conceived in the spirit of the times." He opposed it also because this Radical motion, like the great Whig measure, really implied the undue ascendancy of the middle classes—

" . . . The House will not forget what that class has done in its legislative enterprises. I do not use the term ' middle class ' with any disrespect ; no one more than myself estimates what the urban population has done for the liberty and civilisation of mankind ; but I speak of the middle class as of one which avowedly aims at predominance, and therefore it is expedient to ascertain how far the fact justifies a confidence in their political capacity. It was only at the end of the last century that the middle class rose into any considerable influence, chiefly through Mr. Pitt,¹ that minister whom they are always abusing." He proceeds to praise their abolition of the slave trade : " . . . A noble and sublime act, but carried with an entire ignorance of the subject, as the event has proved. How far it has aggravated the horrors of slavery, I stop not now to inquire. . . . The middle class emancipated the negroes, but they never proposed a Ten Hour Bill. . . . The interests of the working classes of England were not much considered in that arrangement. Having tried their hand at Colonial reform,

¹ " . . . He (Pitt) created a plebeian aristocracy and blended it with the patrician oligarchy. He made peers of second-rate squires and fat graziers. He caught them in the alleys of Lombard Street, and clutched them from the counting-houses of Cornhill. . . ."—*Sybil*.

. . . they next turned their hands to Parliamentary reform, and carried the Reform Bill. But observe, in that operation they destroyed, under the pretence of its corrupt exercise, the old industrial franchise, and they never constructed a new one.

. . . So that whether we look to their Colonial, or their Parliamentary reform, they entirely neglected the industrial classes. Having failed in Colonial as well as Parliamentary reform, . . . they next tried Commercial reform, and introduced free imports under the specious name of free trade.

How were the interests of the working classes considered in this third movement? More than they were in their Colonial or their Parliamentary reform? On the contrary, while the interests of capital were unblushingly advocated, the displaced labour of the country was offered neither consolation nor compensation, but was told that it must submit to be absorbed in the mass. In their Colonial, Parliamentary, and Commercial reforms there is no evidence of any sympathy with the working classes; and every one of the measures so forced upon the country has at the same time proved disastrous. Their Colonial reform ruined the colonies, and increased slavery. Their Parliamentary reform, according to their own account, was a delusion which has filled the people with disappointment and disgust. If their Commercial reform have not proved ruinous, then the picture . . . presented to us of the condition of England every day for the last four or five months must be a gross misrepresentation. In this state of affairs, as a remedy for half a century of failure, we are under their auspices to take refuge in financial reform,¹ which I predict will prove their fourth failure, *and one in which the interests of the working classes will be as little considered and accomplished."*

The third passage concerns the symptoms of a need and the moment for change. Leaders, he argues, should educate and prepare the people, and not allow mere agitators to manufacture grievances, but rather prick the educated and

¹ The motion was designed to throw the burden of taxation on land. Disraeli showed that land was no monopoly, while it remained a security for good government; and that the rental of property in Great Britain, if equally divided among its proprietors, would only amount to £170 as an average annual income per head.

well-born to remember the duties by virtue of which alone they hold their position.

“ . . . A new profession has been discovered which will supply the place of obsolete ones. It is a profession which requires many votaries.

“ Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes,
Augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus.”

The business of this profession is to discover or invent great questions. But the remarkable circumstance is this—that the present movement has not in the slightest degree originated in any class of the people. . . . The moral I draw from all this—from observing this system of organised agitation—this playing and paltering with popular passions for the *aggrandisement of one too ambitious class*—the moral I draw is this: why are the people of England forced to find leaders among these persons? The proper leaders of the people are the gentlemen of England. If they are not the leaders of the people, I do not see why there should be gentlemen. Yes, it is because the gentlemen of England have been negligent of their duties, and unmindful of their station, that the system of professional agitation, so ruinous to the best interests of the country, has arisen in England. It was not always so. My honourable friends around me call themselves the country party. Why, that was the name once in England of a party who were the foremost to vindicate popular rights—who were the natural leaders of the people, and the champions of everything national and popular. . . . When Sir William Wyndham was the leader of the country party, do you think he would have allowed any chairman or deputy-chairman, any lecturer or pamphleteer, to deprive him of his hold on the heart of the people of this country? No, never! Do you think that when the question of suffrage was brought before the House, he would have allowed any class who had boldly avowed their determination to obtain predominance to take up and settle that question? . . .”

Nor let him be misconstrued in his views of the ancestral temperament of the Whigs. Nothing is more remarkable in the chronicle of combinations than the fact that for more than

a century a party, the most exclusive in its operation, was considered the least. The recent publications of the Portland and Harley Papers establish beyond a doubt that while the "New Whigs" of Queen Anne were in large measure a commercial syndicate that "made a corner" in power, the old Whigs of George III. were an aristocratic obligarchy that subverted rule, both popular and personal, and monopolised government.

"How an oligarchy," says Disraeli, in the preface to *Lothair*, "had been substituted for a kingdom, and a narrow-minded and bigoted fanaticism flourished in the name of religious liberty, were problems long to me insoluble, but which early interested me. But what most attracted my musing, even as a boy, was the elements of our political parties, and the strange mystification by which that which was national in its constitution had become odious, and that which was exclusive was presented as popular. What has mainly led to this confusion of public thought, and this uneasiness of society, is our habitual carelessness in not distinguishing between the excellence of a principle and its injurious or obsolete application. The feudal system may have worn out, but its main principle, that the tenure of property should be the fulfilment of duty, is the essence of good government. The divine right of kings may have been a plea for feeble tyrants, but the divine right of government is the keystone of human progress, and without it government sinks into police and a nation is degraded into a mob." And he continues with reference to the Toryism of a later period: ". . . Those who in theory were the national party, and who sheltered themselves under the institutions of the country against the oligarchy, had, both by a misconception and a neglect of their duties, become, and justly become, odious; while the oligarchy . . . had, by the patronage of certain general principles which they only meagrely applied, assumed, and to a certain degree acquired, the character of a popular party. *But no party was national; one was exclusive and odious, and the other liberal and cosmopolitan.*"

His history—I speak as a student of the reigns of Queen Anne and the Georges—will bear scrutiny. Indeed, he carries the descent of Whiggism some steps further, and traces

its pedigree back to the Roundhead Independents,¹ and even the favourites of Henry VIII., enriched by the spoil of the plundered abbeys. But he never denied, or wished to gain-say, the special and signal qualities of the Whigs' conspicuous service. They had reconciled religious liberty to the consecration of the State, and had constantly proved themselves a "national" party²—that solecism in words but truth in ideas. This he repeatedly acknowledges. Neither did he ever spare the soulless, cramped, hollow, and shrivelled Toryism of the period preceding Bolingbroke's and Wyndham's struggle to recall it to its origins ; or again of the period after Pitt's generous concessions were overwhelmed by the Jacobin deluge, and neutralised by the impersonalities of Addington and Perceval ; by the Phariseism of Liverpool's puzzle-headedness ; by the pigheadedness of Eldon and Wetherell. Nor did he ever deny that pseudo-Toryism had often nursed the very vices of the Whig oligarchy.³ What he did contend, from first to last, was that any party which by its elements makes for national growth and union, and favours the free play of custom in institutions, is "national ;" while any party encouraging class warfare, class preponderance, and cosmopolitan theories repugnant to the genius of those institutions, will be "anti-national ;" that the democratic possibilities of our constitution must be spread, as opportunities arise to enlarge the "estate of the Commons ;" yet that this must never mean the enthronement of either Oligarchy or Democracy in place of our mixed government ; further, that in all such expansion influence is more

¹ ". . . But thanks to parliamentary patriotism, the people of England were saved from Ship-money, which money the wealthy paid, and only got in its stead the customs and the excise, which the poor mainly supply. . . ."—*Sybil*.

² ". . . Burke effected for the Whigs what Bolingbroke in a preceding age had done for the Tories : he restored the moral existence of the party. He taught them to recur to the ancient principles of their connection. . . . He raised the tone of their public discourse ; he breathed a high spirit into their public acts. . . ."—*Ibid*.

³ ". . . In my time " (said Mr. Ormsby) ". . . a proper majority was a third of the House. That was Lord Liverpool's majority. Lord Monmouth used to say that there were ten families in this country who, if they could only agree, could always share the government. Ah ! those were the good old times ! . . ."

important than interest ; that theorists must never blind us to the distinction between the "Rights of Man" and the duties of English citizens, between private and public equality, between the "Sovereignty of the People" and a national government ; that over-government is a fatal evil, but that individual leadership is a priceless privilege.

The Reform Act raised the whole question of Representation. Is its aim monotony or variety? If it is necessarily elective, must it not logically end in becoming a plebiscite? Will a vote open to all be prized by any? And is suffrage any panacea for suffering?

Before the Reform Bill of 1832, Disraeli wrote, musing on Athens, and contrasting the strong simplicity of Greek literature with the imitative splendour of Rome, ". . . A mighty era, prepared by the blunders of long centuries, is at hand. Ardently I hope that the necessary change in human existence may be effected by the voice of philosophy alone ; but I tremble and am silent. There is no bigotry so terrible as the bigotry of a country that flatters itself that it is philosophical." In introducing the great Act of 1867, he observed : ". . . The political rights of the working classes which existed before the Act of 1832, and which not only existed, but were acknowledged, were on that occasion disregarded and even abolished, and during the whole period that has since elapsed in consequence of the great vigour that has been given to the Government of this country, and of the multiplicity of subjects commanding interest that have engaged and engrossed attention, no great inconvenience has been experienced from that cause. Still, during all that time there has been a feeling, sometimes a very painful feeling, that questions have arisen which have been treated in this House without that entire national sympathy which is desirable."

The Reform Bill and its sequels transferred the immemorial franchise of toilers to the middle classes, who were to be further aggrandised by the repeal of the Corn Laws.¹ They

¹ That this object was of direct design is proved by a correspondence of Cobden with Sir Robert Peel.

raised the revolutionary bitterness of Toil in England and Religion in Ireland, both of which they provoked to physical force. The Act proved rather a measure for the House of Commons than for the Commons themselves. It was the makeshift and stop-gap of oligarchy in distress. Its immediate effects were to wipe out that parliamentary opposition on which the health of party government depends,¹ to encroach on the independent influence of the House of Lords, to end, it is true unintentionally, the "Venetian Constitution" of those who enfeebled their cause in 1837 by resolving to continue as oligarchs when the weapon of oligarchy had vanished ; while none the less it left the monarch a doge, and the multitude a cipher ; a crown still "robbed of its prerogatives, a Church controlled by a commission, and an aristocracy that does not lead." Such were the joint results of the two large and once great parties that had lost principles in their search after organisation, the one by thwarting, the other by tricking the popular voice. It sharpened the warfare between rich and poor, afterwards aggravated by the acceptance of the principle of unrestricted competition ; it precipitated a plutocracy, it helped to set class against class, and it became a prop of that calculating materialism which exalted "utility." On the other hand, its indirect benefits were many. "It set men a-thinking" (I quote from *Sybil*) ; "it enlarged the horizon of political experience ; it led the public mind to ponder somewhat on the circumstances of our national history ; to pry into the beginnings of some social anomalies which, they found, were not so ancient as they had been led to believe, and which had their origin in causes very different from what they had been educated to credit ; and insensibly it created and prepared a popular intelligence to which one can appeal, no longer hopelessly, in an attempt to dispel the mysteries with which for nearly three centuries it has been the labour of party writers to involve a national history, and without the dispersion of

¹ In a speech of 1864, Disraeli said : ". . . For my own part, believing that parliamentary government is practically impossible without two organised parties, that without them it would be the most contemptible and corrupt system which could be devised, I always regret anything that may damage the just influence of either of the great parties in the State."

which no political position can be understood and no social evil remedied." This latter was an especial province of Disraeli. Carlyle also, as a social regenerator appealing to higher sanctions than the "useful," was able to address the newly awakened "popular intelligence."

Here again Disraeli is in curious accord with Carlyle, the difference between them being that Disraeli, a doer as well as a seer, discerned in the traditional "orders" or "estates" of the realm real curatives of a sick body politic. Both protested against a state based on statistics and a progress that was arithmetical. Both were quick to discriminate, under the surface of parties, between the influences which made for cementing and those which made for dissolving the nation. Both saw in the conservatism and liberalism of the 'thirties, on the one side a pretence of protecting the forms they enfeebled, on the other a pretext and a sop for the universal suffrage which their professions logically implied. Disraeli perceived that such a French democracy was alien to England, and meant eventually some sort of unenlightened despotism, and the aggravation of a government by favouritism and through interference. He therefore resolved to reinspire the three "estates"—and if possible the Crown—with reality ; and thus, in extending franchise, to extend it as the privilege of an order, earned by thrift, education, and intelligence, while he sought to found it on a basis so stable that leadership might never sink into being the sport of a fluid and fickle ignorance. Like Carlyle, he rejoiced that "opinion is now supreme, and opinion speaks in print ; the representation of the Press is far more complete than the representation of Parliament ;" he hailed the spread of knowledge among the mass so early as in the *Revolutionary Epick*. But, unlike Carlyle, he did not deem this increasing power fatal to parliamentary institutions ; indeed, he regarded Parliament as a body privileged to lead and leaven "opinion," and one that should never abandon its proper functions of initiative. Both Parliament and the Press in his eyes were vents for that free discussion inseparable from political health, but the one ought to form a school for statesmen, the other an arena for critics. And Disraeli also held and enforced that parties

should never be particularist, but should rest on some national principle instead of on incoherent prejudices. Parties should represent broad attitudes towards working institutions. Only thus can they escape debasement into sets on the one hand, and shams on the other. If parties are split up into intriguing factions, they are solvents ; if they become merely the masks of disregarded principles, they grow lifeless and hypocritical. They are at once " humbug and humdrum."

In his fine speech of February, 1850, on Agricultural Distress (a distress greatly due to the unrestricted competition of English land with foreign acres,¹ and only to be met by what he then proposed and long afterwards carried—the relief of its peculiar burdens), Disraeli dwelt on the sad fact that the labourers of the land made no appeal to Parliament. " Why, what is that," he urged, " but a want of confidence in the institutions of the country ?" Cobden, who definitely and avowedly sought the predominance of one portion alone, of middle-class individual interest, gave an ironical cheer. Carlyle had already published his philippic against Parliament. But Disraeli—and with justice—continued—

" . . . The honourable gentleman cheers as if I sanctioned such doctrines : I have never sanctioned the expression of such feelings ; I never used language elsewhere which I have not been ready to repeat in this House. I never said one thing in one place, and another in another. I have confidence in the justice and wisdom of the House of Commons, although I sit with the minority ; I have expressed that confidence in other places. . . . I have expressed the conviction that I earnestly entertain, that this House, instead of being an assembly with a deaf ear and a callous heart to the sufferings of the agricultural body, would, on the contrary, be found to be an assembly prompt to express sympathy, prompt to repair, if it might be, even the injury, necessary in the main as they might think it, which they had entailed on the

¹ The great depression of 1847-51 was not wholly caused by the fiscal change. It was largely due to reaction after the railway mania, as Disraeli pointed out in a speech of 1879. It was followed by a rise in wages, due, not to Free Trade, but to the large imports of newly discovered gold ; and by an increased purchasing power which *was* due to Peel's large abatements of the tariff.

agricultural classes of the country. . . . I have that confidence in the good sense of the English people that . . . they will deem we are only doing our duty, we are only consulting their interests in taking every opportunity to alleviate their burdens, in trying to devise remedies for their burdens; and, if we cannot accomplish immediately any great financial result, at least achieving this great political purpose—that we may teach them not to despair of the institutions of their country.”

This purpose he had sought to accomplish two years before, when, in 1848, he proved by a speech which, it is said, won him the eventual leadership of his party, that the breakdown which Carlyle was at that time preparing to denounce, was due to an incapable ministry, and not to an effete Parliament. He always held Parliament to be neither a municipal vestry nor a chamber of commerce, but a national temple of embodied opinion; nor can the wisdom of his view in those dark and despondent times be better tested than by comparing, in the light of what has since occurred, than by contrasting Carlyle's fulminations in this regard with Disraeli's discernment.

“ . . . There is a phenomenon,” says Carlyle, in his “Chartism,” “which one might call Paralytic Radicalism in these days, which gauges with statistic measuring-reed, sounds with Philosophic Politico-Economic plummet, the deep, dark sea of trouble, and, having taught us rightly what an infinite sea of trouble it is, sums up with the practical inference and use of consolation, That nothing whatever in it can be done by man, who has simply to sit still and look wistfully to ‘Time and General Laws;’ and thereupon, without so much as recommending suicide, coldly takes its leave of us. . . .”

Disraeli, on the other hand—

“ . . . ‘In this country,’ said ‘Sidonia,’ ‘since the peace, there has been an attempt to advocate a reconstruction of society on a purely rational basis. The principle of Utility has been powerfully developed. I speak not with lightness of the labours of the disciples of that school. I bow to intellect in every form; and we should be grateful to any school of philosophers, even if we disagree with them. . . .”

There has been an attempt to reconstruct society on a basis of material motives and calculations. It has failed. It must ultimately have failed under any circumstances; its failure in an ancient and densely peopled kingdom was inevitable. How limited is human reason, the profoundest inquirers are most conscious. We are not indebted to the reason of man for any of the great achievements which are the landmarks of human action and human progress. It was not Reason that besieged Troy; it was not Reason that sent forth the Saracen from the desert to conquer the world, that inspired the crusades, that instituted the monastic order; it was not Reason that produced the Jesuits; above all, it was not Reason that created the French Revolution. . . ."

I may compare with this the light episode of the travelling Utilitarian in the much earlier *Young Duke*—

" . . . 'I think it is not very difficult to demonstrate the use of an aristocracy,'¹ mildly observed the Duke.

" 'Pooh! nonsense, sir! I know what you are going to say, but we have got beyond all that. Have you read this, sir? This article on the aristocracy in *The Screw and Lever Review*?'

" 'I have not, sir.'

" 'Then I advise you to make yourself master of it, and you will talk no more of the aristocracy. A few more articles like this, and a few more noblemen like the man who has got this park, and people will open their eyes at last.'

" 'I should think,' said his Grace, 'that the follies of the man who has got this park have been productive of evil only to himself. In fact, sir, according to your own system, a prodigal nobleman seems to be a very desirable member of the commonwealth, and a complete leveller.'

" 'We shall get rid of them all soon, sir. . . .'

" 'I have heard that he is very young, sir,' remarked the widow.

¹ It should be borne in mind that Disraeli sometimes employs the words "aristocracy" and "democracy" to mean the order of aristocrats and democrats, sometimes to mean the systems of exclusion and inclusion, sometimes to mean the government by the best and by the miscellaneous, and oftener as indicating elements in our Constitution.

“‘Ah, youth is a very trying time! Let us hope the best. He may turn out well yet, poor soul!’

“‘I hope not. Don’t talk to me of poor souls. There is a poor soul,’ said the Utilitarian, pointing to an old man breaking stones on the highway. ‘That is what I call a poor soul, not a young prodigal. . . .’”

No one who has followed the labour movement in England, or the social-democrat organisations in Germany and France, can fail to recognise the immense part that personality, imagination, and desire of power plays in them, and how completely, in their instance, utilitarianism has broken down. Utilitarianism, of course, ignores the moral and imaginative aspects. It mistakes the moon for a cream-cheese. It ignores personal influence. Above all, it confounds happiness with prosperity. “Charcoal,” exclaims Ruskin (here in complete accord with Disraeli), “may be cheap among your roof-timbers after a fire, and bricks may be cheap in your streets after an earthquake; but fire and earthquake may not therefore be national benefits.” Even in a concern purely commercial, reserve must be weighed against dividends.

Again, as regards this very Reform Bill of 1832, and the stagnant formulæ of its pioneer, I will again invoke Carlyle—

“ . . . An ultra-radical, not seemingly of the Benthamite species, is forced to exclaim, ‘The people are at last wearied! They say, “Why should we be ruined in our shops, thrown out of our farms, voting for these men?” Ministerial majorities decline; this Ministry has become impotent, had it even the will to do good. They have long called to us, “We are a Reform Ministry; will ye not support *us*?”’ We have supported them, borne them forward indignantly on our shoulders time after time, fall after fall, when they had been hurled out into the street, and lay prostrate, helpless, like dead luggage. It is the fact of a Reform Ministry, not the name of one, that we would support. . . . The public mind says at last, Why all this struggle for the *name* of a Reform Ministry? Let the Tories be a ministry, if they will; let, at least, some living reality be a ministry!’ . . .”

Let me illustrate Carlyle by two further passages from

Disraeli. The first concerns parties in 1837, the second concerns the withered and withering Toryism left to confront the hollow conventions of the Reform Ministry. He is arguing that "the man who enters public life at this epoch has to choose between political infidelity and a destructive creed."

"... The principle of the *exclusive* constitution of England having been conceded by the Acts of 1827-28-32, . . . a party has arisen in the State who demand that the principle of political liberalism shall consequently be carried to its extent, which it appears to them is impossible without getting rid of the fragments of the old constitution that remain. This is the destructive party—a party with distinct and intelligible principles. They seek a specific for the evils of our social system in the general suffrage of the population. They are resisted by another party who, having given up exclusion, would only embrace as much liberalism as is necessary for the moment ; who, without any embarrassing promulgation of principles, wish to keep things as they find them as well as they can ; but, as a party must have the semblance of principles, they take the names of the things that they have destroyed. Thus they are devoted to the prerogatives of the Crown, although in truth the Crown has been stripped of every one of its prerogatives ; they affect a great veneration for the constitution in Church and State, although every one knows that it no longer exists ; they are ready to stand or fall with the independence of the Upper House of Parliament, although in practice they are perfectly well aware that, with their sanction, the 'Upper House' has abdicated its initiatory functions, and now serves only as a court of review of the legislation of the House of Commons. Whenever public opinion, which this party never attempts to form, to educate, or to lead, falls into some violent perplexity, passion, or caprice, this party yields without a struggle to the impulse, and, when the storm has passed, attempts to obstruct and obviate the logical, and ultimately the inevitable results of the very measures they have themselves originated, or to which they have consented. This is the Conservative party. I care not whether men are called Whigs or Tories, Radicals or Chartists, . . . but these two divisions comprehend at

present the English nation. . . . With regard to the first school, I for one have no faith in the remedial qualities of a Government carried on by a neglected democracy, who for three centuries have received no education. What prospect does it offer us of those high principles of conduct with which we have fed our imagination and strengthened our will? I perceive none of the elements of government that should secure the happiness of a people and the greatness of a realm. . . . Many men in this country . . . are reconciled to the contemplation of democracy, because they have accustomed themselves to believe that it is the only power by which we can sweep away *those sectional privileges and interests that impede the intelligence and industry of the community*, . . . and yet the only way . . . to terminate what, in the language of the present day, is called class legislation, *is not to entrust power to classes*. You would find a 'locofoco'¹ majority as much addicted to class legislation as a factitious aristocracy. . . . In a word, *true wisdom lies in a policy that would effect its ends by the influence of opinion, and yet by the means of existing forms.*"

And the other—

"Mr. Rigby began by ascribing everything to the Reform Bill, and then referred to several of his own speeches on Schedule A. Then he told Coningsby that want of 'religious faith was solely occasioned by want of churches, and want of loyalty by George IV. having shut up himself too much at the cottage in Windsor Park, entirely against the advice of Mr. Rigby. He assured Coningsby that the Church Commission was operating wonders. . . . The great question now was their architecture. Had George IV. lived, all would have been right. They would have been built on the model of the Buddhist pagoda. As for loyalty, if the present king went regularly to Ascot races, he had no doubt all would go right. Finally, Mr. Rigby impressed on Coningsby to read the *Quarterly Review* with great attention, and to make himself master of Mr. Wordy's "History of the Late War," in

¹ This phrase is American, and refers to the democrat extremists, conduct in Tammany Hall in 1834. The same year had seen the invention of the "self-lighting" cigar.

twenty volumes—a capital work which proves that Providence was on the side of the Tories.' . . ."

As regards the principles and conduct of the Reform Ministers themselves, years before he entered Parliament, in that brilliant series of speeches on the hustings of High Wycombe and Taunton, which preluded so many of his ideas, he denounced the incompleteness of the measure and the inadequacy of the men. In 1832 he said—

" . . . If, instead of filling the humble position of a private individual, I held a post near the person of my King, I should have said to my sovereign, 'Oppose all change, or allow that change which will be full, satisfactory, and final.' In the change produced by the professing party now in power, there are omissions of immense importance. These points they promised ; these points they have not given you ; and now, after all their protestations, they turn round and ask how the people can have the audacity to demand them."¹

In 1834 he denounced "the Whig system of centralisation," and their organised attempt to "overpower" the House of Lords and to despotise the House of Commons, while of their subsequent disorganisation from within, because of the failure of concerted opposition from without, he gave that surpassing simile of Ducrow's Circus. In 1835 he pursued the subject of constitutional opposition, and he expressed his dread, as he did in 1881, that if the Whigs remained "our masters for life, the dismemberment of the Empire" might follow. And all this in the teeth of what was then considered a system installed for fifty years, and which would have

¹ At that time, under the full spell of the analogy which the age of Walpole presented, he believed that triennial parliaments and the ballot might redress the balance of constitutional power and foil the oligarchs who had baffled the people by espousing a popular cry. In 1852, however, he said, with regard to those proposals brought forward by Mr. Hume : " . . . He did not object to them, but he saw no necessity to adopt them. His objections to the latter were distinctly founded on the limits of the franchise which the settlement of 1832 had not sufficiently extended, but . . . if they had universal suffrage they came to a new constitution—a constitution commonly called the 'Sovereignty of the People,' but that is not the Constitution of England ; for, wisely modified as that monarchy may be, the Constitution of England is the sovereignty of Queen Victoria."

promised him a personal triumph had he appeared then to have chosen to have endorsed it.

But the views he always retained as to the first principles of representation are best heard in a passage from *Coningsby*.

"... In the protracted discussions to which this celebrated measure gave rise, nothing is more remarkable than the perplexities into which the speakers on both sides are thrown when they touch upon the nature of the representative principle. On the one hand, it was maintained that under the old system the people were virtually represented, while, on the other, it was triumphantly urged that, if the principle was conceded, the people should not be virtually, but actually represented. But who are the people? And where are you to draw a line? And why should there be any? It was urged that a contribution to the taxes was the constitutional qualification for the suffrage." Here is repeated what he had urged in the 'thirties, and was to reiterate in the 'fifties, that indirect taxation is as much taxation as direct; that "the beggar who chews his quid as he sweeps a crossing is contributing to the imposts; . . . he is one of the people, and he yields his quota to the public burthens." The logical inference of such a qualification must be to convert the suffrage from being a privilege into being a right. Manhood suffrage, in common with all privilege unearned, is usually prized by none, and even disregarded by most.

"Amid these conflicting statements," he continues, "it is singular that no member of either House should have recurred to the original character of these popular assemblies which have always prevailed among the northern nations. . . . When the crowned northman consulted on the welfare of his kingdom, he assembled the estates of his realm. Now, an estate is a class of the nation invested with political rights. Then appeared the estate of the clergy, of the barons, of other classes. In the Scandinavian kingdoms to this day the estate of the peasants sends its representatives to the Diet. In England, under the Normans, the Church and the Baronage were convoked together with the estate of the Community, a term which then probably described the inferior holders of land whose tenure was not immediate of the Crown.

The Third Estate was so numerous that convenience suggested its appearance by representation, while the others, more limited, appeared, and still appear, personally. The Third Estate was reconstructed as circumstances developed themselves. It was a reform of Parliament when the towns were summoned. In treating the House of the Third Estate as the House of the People, and not as the House of a privileged class, the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 virtually conceded the principle of universal suffrage. In this point of view, the ten-pound franchise was an arbitrary, irrational, impolitic qualification. It had indeed the merit of simplicity, and so had the constitution of Abbé Sièyes. But its immediate and inevitable result was Chartism.

"But if the Ministry and Parliament of 1831 had announced that the time had arrived when the Third Estate should be enlarged and reconstructed, they would have occupied an intelligible position ; and if, instead of simplicity of elements in its reconstruction, they had sought, on the contrary, varying and various materials which would have neutralised the painful predominance of any particular interest in the new scheme, and prevented those banded jealousies which have been its consequence, the nation would have found itself in a secure position. Another class, not less numerous than the existing one, and invested with privileges not less important, would have been added to the public estates of the realm, and the bewildering phrase, 'the People,' would have remained what it really is, a term of natural philosophy, and not of political science."

The quality, then, of excellence, instead of the majorities of multitude, the variety of every approved influence, and not the undue weight of any overwhelming interest—these formed for him the true bases of representation. He was ever for levelling up instead of down ; and, as we shall see, he was directly opposed to Mr. Hume's fallacy (still rampant) that by our traditions representation depends only on taxation.

These ideas animated him throughout, and he achieved them in 1867, not, though it has been insinuated, by filching the proposals of his predecessors, but on the opposed

principles which he continued to advocate from the 'thirties to the 'sixties. In 1835, two years before he entered Parliament, he expressed the same convictions in his *Spirit of Whiggism*. He showed that the two Houses were the "House of the Nation," not the "House of the People," but that both alike represent the "Nation." He proceeded to prove by powerful illustration that, under whatever assumed form, political power will follow the distribution of property. He emphasised the "passion for industry" as an instrument of wealth as an English characteristic hostile to any future revolution in the distribution of property. He proved that in England revolution is ever a struggle for privilege, in Europe one against it; and he concluded, therefore, that "... If a new class rises in the State, it becomes uneasy to take its place in the natural aristocracy of the land. ... *The Whigs in the present day have risen on the power of the manufacturing interest. To secure themselves in their posts, the Whigs have given the new interest an undue preponderance.* But the new interest has obtained its object and is content. ... The manufacturer begins to lack in movement. Under Walpole the Whigs played the same game with the commercial interest. A century has passed, and the commercial interests are all as devoted to the Constitution as the manufacturers soon will be. ... The consequence of our wealth is an aristocratic constitution, *founded on an equality of civil rights.* And who can deny that an aristocratic constitution resting on such a basis, where the legislative and even the executive office may be obtained by every subject of the realm, *is in fact a noble democracy?*"

These are no dry theories, but surely a true version of growing facts. Our Constitution *is* that of a natural aristocracy founded on popular privilege depending on the mutual exercise of duties. This free aristocracy distributes its power through the estates of the realm, and these orders should accord with the institutions to which they have given rise; for, as Disraeli said in 1852, they are "popular" without being absolutely "democratic." When any one of them degenerates into undue monopoly, the whole body must suffer; and should such a catastrophe attain any permanence,

one of the great institutions through which English nationality thrives would be shattered by the very order to which it corresponds. What Disraeli observes of the eventual reduction of each new ascendant interest to aristocratic influence, is beyond question. But that influence must rest on the due performance of civil and social responsibilities which empower it. Stripped of historical verbiage, the "constitution" harmonises classes through special privileges and reciprocal duties. Of the "middle-middles" he always spoke with respect, of the "lower-middles" with much sympathy, not least as victims of the income-tax;¹ but he ever doubted their governing capacity as a class; and when Sir Robert Peel's "monarchy of the middle classes" came into swing, Disraeli feared the plutocracy which has happened, and which, when financial, is more easily freed from political responsibility. The choice offered between wealth omnipotent and mob-despotism, is a choice between Scylla and Charybdis. To obviate it, Disraeli created in 1867 an artisan franchise, accorded as a boon at length earned by character and intelligence, and based on the *rating* principle, which affords a pledge of permanence; at the same time, he strove to countervail the growing irresponsibility of wealth by relieving unprotected land of its burdens and unrepresented labour of its degradation. By the first, he strove to retain that sap of the soil which underlies the English character, the English health, the English order, through local government, the English freedom, and the English steadiness; for (and this was said in 1852), "... Laws which, by imposing unequal taxes, discourage that investment (*i.e.* capital invested in land, the return for which is rent) are, irrespective of their injustice, highly impolitic; for nothing contributes more to the enduring prosperity of a country than the natural deposit of its surplus capital in the improvement of its soil. . . ." By the last, he tried to redress that social misery which the measures of 1846 had not removed and had even increased: the overcrowding of the towns, the displacement of labour, the subsidising of foreign agriculture

¹ Cf. speech, May 18, 1871. The Whigs, who in 1843 called it "a fungus of monopoly," worked and upheld it afterwards as "Liberals." Now that a democracy and an Empire are being "run" at the same time, its permanence, for many years questioned, seems assured.

to the decultivation of English land, the enthronement of Mammon and materialism—all denounced and foreseen by him with wonderful prescience. Very soon after the repeal of the Corn Laws, discerning, as Disraeli did, its drift of denationalising tendencies, its certainty of some social and physical demoralisation, as well as the possible changes in European competition which might necessitate another "commercial and social revolution," he inveighed against the inference that "we are to be rescued from the alleged power of one class, only to fall under the avowed dominion of another;" he believed that "the monarchy of England, its sovereign power mitigated by the acknowledged authority of the estates of the realm, has its root in the hearts of the people, and is capable of securing the happiness of the nation and the power of the State." His peroration—some of which I shall give in the next chapter—is a noble flight of hope. He discerned at once that the transformation scene of 1846 would affect society more than politics, and that the next extension of the franchise must consequently prove a social antidote as well as a social sedative.

In 1839, refuting Mr. Hume's hobby already alluded to, he showed that the theory is nowhere inherent in our Constitution, but is a doctrinaire supplement of alien origin; that the "Commons" are a political order invested with power for the performance of duties, just as the Peers are a similar order, but needing no representation; he re-urged that the House of Commons was the representative of the "nation"—an organic whole, and not of the "people"—a vague abstraction. He had even then already pointed out that, historically, the delegates before the Restoration had perverted the national traditions by announcing, more than a century before the French Revolution, the sovereignty of the "people." He once more stoutly denied that "taxation and representation went hand-in-hand" according to our constitution. There was representation without election, as in the case of the Church in the Lords, for the Crown appointed the bishops, not the clergy. And as regards taxation, it was indirect, as well as, unfortunately, direct. In the same year, protesting against Lord John Russell's assumption of a "monarchy of the middle classes," Disraeli repeated that in

this country "the exercise of political power must be associated with great public duties," just as in 1846, when justifying the burdens on land so long as protection was accorded it, he asserted that great honours demand great burdens. Again, in 1848, Disraeli, opposing Mr. Hume once more, and protesting against the finality of the reconstruction of 1832, even before Lord John Russell declared the question free for both parties in 1853 and 1856—strongly condemned the radical scheme just because it did not ". . . enable the labouring classes to take their place in the Constitution of the country." "If there be any mistake," he said, "more striking than another in the settlement of 1832, . . . it is, in my opinion, that the bill of 1832 took the qualification of *property* in too hard and rigid a sense, as the only qualification which should exist in this country for the exercise of political rights." In 1852, he again dinned into unappreciative ears the necessity for a genuinely industrial franchise, though he was not satisfied that Lord John Russell's £5 franchise would so operate. In 1859 and 1867, Disraeli tried hard to confer franchises on education and thrift, but Mr. Bright sneered at them as "fancy franchises," Mr. Gladstone scoffed at them, and in forwarding the great measure of labour suffrage by the compelled co-operation of both sides of the House, Disraeli had to surrender safeguards he never ceased to desire and to regret, for they are founded on the State recognition of individual excellence, instead of on the State manipulation of mere party mechanism.

"Is the possession of the franchise," demanded Disraeli in 1851, "to be a privilege, the privilege of industry and public virtue, or is it to be a right—the right of every one, however degraded, however indolent, however unworthy? . . . I am for the system which maintains in this country *a large and free Government, having confidence in the energies and faculties of man*. Therefore I say, make the franchise a privilege, but let it be the privilege of *the civic virtues*. Honourable gentlemen opposite would degrade the franchise to the man, instead of raising the man to the franchise. If you want to have a free aristocratic country, free because aristocratic (I use the word 'aristocratic' in its noblest sense—I mean *that aristocratic freedom which enables every man to achieve the best position in the*

State to which his qualities entitle him), I know not what we can do better than adhere to the *mitigated monarchy of England, with power in the Crown, order in one estate of the realm, and liberty in the other.* It is from that happy combination that we have produced a state of society that all other nations look upon with admiration and envy."

In all these considerations, the social results of measures and formulæ were ever uppermost in his mind. What he had ever been resolute to secure was, as he avowed even in 1850, "the industrial franchise," which the resettlement of 1832 had thrown to the winds.

Again, in 1865, ". . . It appears to me," urged Disraeli, "that the primary plan of our ancient constitution, so rich in various wisdom, indicates the course that we ought to pursue in this matter. It secured our popular rights by entrusting power, not to an indiscriminate multitude, but to the estate, or order, of the Commons. And a wise government should be careful that the elements of that estate *should bear a close relation to the moral and material development of the country.* Public opinion may not yet, perhaps, be ripe enough to legislate as to the subject, but it is sufficiently interested in the question to ponder over it with advantage ; so that, *when the time comes for action,* we may legislate in the spirit of the English Constitution, *which would absorb the best of every class,* and not fall into a 'democracy' which is the tyranny of one class, and that *one the least enlightened.*"

Long before 1867, these continuous utterances culminated that typical speech of 1859, which mooted a comprehensive plan of enlarged representation of political power, yet undisturbed balance, and which would have made "a representative assembly that is a mirror of the mind as well as of the material interests of England."

I shall quote largely from this unfamiliar speech. It illustrates how far his lifelong principles applied to a juncture before the artisans were wholly free from agitation against monarchy, and those institutions which fence it round. All Radical schemes, compassing "manhood suffrage," all Whig schemes, merely delaying its day by seeking to reduce rental or property qualifications to an arbitrary minimum, were his

aversion. Set, as he always was, against including whatever at the moment formed the dregs of ignorance, or the sediment of an unentitled populace, he already favoured that "rating" basis which Lord John Russell, always constitutional, had himself propounded in his abortive plan of 1854, and which Disraeli was to carry out in 1867 as a safeguard of stability in the boroughs. But in 1859 Lord Derby did not consider its application feasible. Disraeli had, therefore, now to forego it. Refusing to make any reductions in the franchise, or yield an inch to "detached" democracy, he now proposed to attain steadiness, to vary the vote, and to represent enlightenment contrasted with mere property by recommending the creation of the "compound householder" ("dwellers in a portion of any house rented in the aggregate at £20")¹; by a new suffrage for several small ownerships of property in the funds and savings banks; and for education, by enfranchising graduates, ministers of religion, physicians, barristers, and certain schoolmasters. He thus both forecasted, so far as was then practicable, household suffrage as against household democracy; and at the same time sought to represent education and ensure variety. By his attendant scheme of redistribution, he tried to prevent the counties from being "swamped" by the towns, while at the same time he jealously guarded the local independence of the boroughs. His purpose was to protect the country districts against that invasion from the cities of agrarian demagogues which, after his death, the stride forward of 1884 was to impel.²

But "finality is not the word of politics." Progress changes possibilities. He had to wait till the pear was ripe; till the working man had been really reconciled to monarchy and its institutions; till the ground had been laid for a generous scheme of national education, and cleared by the sharply defined position of parties, which at last brought into relief the issues between democracy as a due element and as a domineering class. Nor, if he were now alive, would he fail to discern that the appeal of present imperialism to present

¹ This precluded the "Lodger franchise," of which, in 1867, Disraeli said he had been "the father" (cf. p. 108).

² Cf. p. 109.

democracy will be dangerous if made to it as a deciding class before it has acquired the governing faculty by long apprenticeship. Democracy as a leaven, democracy as the lump, are obviously distinct. The one is "popular and national," the other despotic or cosmopolitan. Our artisans are now intensely national and patriotic; but the "submerged tenth" would soon show themselves tyrants over the community.

The pith of his argument is that mere numbers can never form the ground of representation, which should rest on influence even more than interest.

". . . It appears to me that those who are called parliamentary reformers may be divided into two classes. The first are those . . . who would adapt the settlement of 1832 to the England of 1859, and would act in the spirit and according to the genius of the existing constitution. . . . But, sir, it would not be candid, and it would be impolitic not to acknowledge that there is another school of reformers having objects very different from those which I have named. The new school, if I may so describe them, would avowedly effect a parliamentary reform on principles different from those which have hitherto been acknowledged as forming the proper foundations for this House. The new school of reformers are of opinion that the chief, if not the sole, object of representation is to realise the opinion of the numerical majority of the country. Their standard is *population*, and I admit that their views have been clearly and efficiently placed before the country. Now, sir, there is no doubt that population is, and must always be, one of the elements of our representative system. There is also such a thing as property, and that too must be considered. I am ready to admit that the new school have not on any occasion limited the elements of their representative system solely to population. They have, with a murmur, admitted that property has an equal claim to consideration; but then, they have said that *property and population go together*. Well, sir, population and property do go together—in statistics, but in nothing else. Population and property do not go together in politics and practice. I cannot agree with the principles of the new school, either if

population or property is their sole, or if both together constitute their double, standard. I think the function of this House is something more than merely to represent the population and property of this country. *This House ought, in my opinion, to represent all the interests of the country.* Now, those interests are sometimes antagonistic, often competing, always independent and jealous; yet they all demand a distinctive representation in this House, and how can that be effected, under such circumstances, *by the simple representation of the voice of the majority, or even by the mere preponderance of property?* If the function of this House is to represent all the interests of the country, you must, of course, have a representation scattered over the country, because interests are necessarily local. An illustration is always worth two arguments; permit me, therefore, so to explain my meaning, if it requires explanation. Let me take the two cases of the metropolis and that of the kingdom of Scotland. . . . Their populations are at this time about equal. Their respective wealth is very unequal. . . . There is between them the annual difference in the amounts of income upon which the schedules are levied of that between £44,000,000 and £30,000,000. Yet who would for a moment pretend that the various classes and interests of Scotland could be adequately represented by the same number of members as represent the metropolis? So much for the population test. Let us now take the property test. . . . The wealth of the city of London is more than equivalent to that of twenty-five English and Welsh counties returning forty members, and of 140 boroughs returning 232 members. The city of London, the city proper, is richer than Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham put together. . . . It is richer than Bristol, Leeds, Newcastle, Sheffield, Hull, Wolverhampton, Bradford, Brighton, Stoke-upon-Trent, Nottingham, Greenwich, Preston, East Retford, Sunderland, York, and Salford combined—towns which return among them no less than thirty-one members. Yet the city of London has not asked me to insert it in the bill, which I am asking leave to introduce, for thirty-one members. . . . So much . . . for the property test. . . . But the truth is, that *men are sent to this House to preresent the opinions of a place, and not its power.* . . .

“Why, sir, the power of the city of London or that of the city of Manchester in this House is not to be measured by the honourable and respectable individuals whom they send here to represent their opinions. I will be bound to say that there is a score—nay, that there are threescore—members in this House who are as much and more interested, perhaps, in the city of Manchester than those who are in this House its authoritative and authentic representatives. . . . Look at the metropolis itself, not speaking merely of the city of London. Is the influence of the metropolis in this House to be measured by the sixteen honourable members who represent it? So much for that principle of population, or that principle of property, which has been adopted by some; or that principle of population and property combined, which seems to be the more favourite form. . . . There is one remarkable circumstance connected with the new school, who would build up our representation on the basis of a numerical majority, and who take population as their standard. It is this—that none of their principles apply *except in cases where population is concentrated*. The principle of population is . . . a very notorious doctrine at the present moment, but it is not novel. . . . It was the favourite argument of the late Mr. Hume. . . . The principle, in my opinion, is false, and would produce results dangerous to the country and fatal to the House of Commons. But if it be true, . . . then I say you must arrive at conclusions entirely different from those which the new school has adopted. If population is to be the standard, and you choose to disfranchise small boroughs and small constituencies, it is not to the great towns you can, according to your own principles, transfer their members. . . .

“Let us now see what will be the consequence if the population principle is adopted. You would have a House, generally speaking, formed partly of great landowners and partly of great manufacturers. I have no doubt that, whether we look to their property or to their character, there would be no country in the world which could rival in respectability such an assembly. But would it be a House of Commons; would it represent the country; would it represent the various interests of England? Why, sir, after all, the suffrage and the

seat respecting which there is so much controversy and contest, *are only means to an end. . . . You want in this House every element that obtains the respect and engages the interest of the country. . . . You want a body of men representing the vast variety of the English character ; men who would arbitrate between the claims of those great predominant interests ; who would temper the acerbity of their controversies. You want a body of men to represent that considerable portion of the community who cannot be ranked under any of those striking and powerful heads to which I have referred, but who are in their aggregate equally important and valuable, and perhaps as numerous."*

He then adverted to the borough system as an indirect machinery for this purpose, and contended that those who would sweep it away must substitute "machinery as effective." ". . . Now," he continued, "there is one remarkable feature in the agitation of the new school. . . . They offer no substitute whatever. . . . I will tell you what must be the natural consequence of such a state of things. The House will lose, as a matter of course, its hold on the Executive. The House will assemble. It will have men sent to it, no doubt, of character and wealth ; and having met here, they will be unable to carry on the Executive of the country. Why? Because the experiment has been tried in every country, and the same result has occurred ; *because it is not in the power of one or two classes to give that variety of character and acquirement by which the administration of a country can be carried on.* Well, then, what happens? *We fall back on a bureaucratic system,*¹ and we should find ourselves, after all our struggles, in the very same position from which, in 1640, we had to extricate ourselves. Your administration would be carried on by a court minister, perhaps by a court minion. It might not be in these times, but in some future time. The result of such a system would be to create an assembly where the members of Parliament, though chosen by great constituencies, would be chosen from limited classes, and perhaps only from one class of the community. . . ." His

¹ This once more is emphasised by De Tocqueville as the essence of centralisation.

own prescription for breaking monotony, he described as "lateral," not "vertical" extension.

Disraeli determined to settle this question himself, and to settle it by the admission to the franchise of the "working" classes of the country, and not by lowering it to the "man in the street," or the submerged tenth. In these views he followed the Toryism of Cobbett rather than the Radicalism of Hume. Discussing Lord John Russell's proposals of 1860 "for the representation of the people" (which, though it adopted the principle of rateability, was, in fact, merely a reduction of the borough franchise to £6, and of the county occupation to £10), Disraeli labelled its "simplicity" as "of a mediæval character, but without any of the inspiration of the feudal system, or any of the genius of the middle ages." It sought only to scale down a property qualification. The "claims of intelligence, acquirement, and education" were ignored. As regarded the borough franchise, not fitness, but number was the principle; and the numerical addition accrued to one class only.

" . . . Let us now consider," Disraeli continued, "whether the particular class upon whom the noble lord is about to confer this great political power, are a class who are incapable, or who are unlikely to exercise it. Are they a class who have shown no inclination to combine? Are they a class incapable of organisation? Quite the reverse. If we look to the history of this country during the present century, we shall find that the aristocracy, or upper classes, have on several very startling occasions shown a great power of organisation. *I think it cannot be denied that the working-classes, especially since the peace of 1815, have shown a remarkable talent for organisation, and a power of discipline and combination inferior to none.* The same, I believe, cannot be said of the middle classes. With the exception of the Anti-Corn Law League, I cannot recall at this moment any great successful political organisation of the middle classes; and living in an age when everything is known, we now know that that great confederation . . . owed its success to a great and unforeseen calamity, and was on the eve of dispersion and dissolution only a short time before that terrible event occurred." The

upper and lower classes, he argued, were capable of organisation and ideas, and the organisation of the latter had been secret as well as disciplined. Their intelligence and their discipline, then, were reasons for conferring the franchise, but their traditional organisation was also a reason for care in its bestowal, and such discrimination as would not give them a *predominance*. ". . . What has been . . . the object of our legislative labours for many years, but to put an end to a class-legislation which was much complained of? But you are now proposing to establish a class legislation of a kind which may well be viewed with apprehension. . . ."

Disraeli discerned that what in England is discontent, on the Continent is disaffection; and that revolution abroad corresponds to reform at home. Chartism verged perilously on the uprisings which endanger countries where government is out of touch with the governed. It was a sign that institutions might be on their trial, and it demanded that those institutions should resume reality, and win once more the affections of the people.

In his resolve to spread the franchise in his own manner, and to neutralise the revolutionary bias of agitators and secret societies, he never lost sight of the growing force of public opinion. He himself was "a gentleman of the press;" in the improved and multiplied newspapers he hailed the great safety-valve afforded to England by that "publicity" on which "the great fabric of political freedom" has been reared. "Free intercourse," he exclaimed in the 'thirties, "is the spirit of the age!" So late as 1872, he observed, ". . . That has been the principle of the whole of our policy. First of all, we made our courts of law public, and during the last forty years we have completely emancipated the periodical press of England, which was not literally free before, giving it such power that it throws light upon the life of almost every class in this country, and I might say upon the life of almost every individual." In the press (the light of which he perhaps valued more than the warmth), he welcomed an antidote against hidden and perilous associations; and believed that if the self-respecting hand-labourer received the vote (as he was entitled to do), he would exercise it in the

cause of freedom, of loyalty, and of order. In 1862, he declared "parliamentary discipline founded on its only sure basis, sympathising public opinion," to be the watchword of his propaganda. The passage summarises much that I have discussed.

" . . . To build up a community, not upon Liberal opinions, which any man may fashion to his fancy, but upon popular principles which assert equal rights, civil and religious ; to uphold the institutions of the country because they are the embodiment of the wants and wishes of the nation, and protect us alike from individual tyranny and popular outrage ; equally to resist democracy " (as a form of government) " and oligarchy, and to favour that principle of *free aristocracy* which is the only basis and security for constitutional government ; . . . to favour popular education, because it is the best guarantee of public order ; to defend local government, and to be as jealous of the rights of the working man as of the prerogative of the Crown and the privileges of the senate ;—these were once the principles which regulated Tory statesmen (*i.e.* Bolingbroke and Wyndham), and I for one have no wish that the Tory party should ever be in power unless they practise them."

In his great speech during the summer of the following year on "popular principles" and "liberal opinions," as well as on the introduction of his actual Reform Bill, he gave expression once more to his distinction between "popular privileges" and "democratic rights"—

" . . . If the measure bears some reference to the existing classes in this country, why should we conceal from ourselves that *this country is a country of classes, and a country of classes it will ever remain ?* What we desire to do is to give every one who is worthy of it a fair share in the government of the country by means of the elective franchise ; but at the same time we have been equally anxious to maintain the character of the House. . . ."

As a matter of tactics, Disraeli had of design framed the bill on lines stricter than he was prepared to concede. He desired that the re-settlement should be enduring, and he deliberately appealed to the co-operation of both parties for

this purpose. He had "leaped in the dark," he had "shot Niagara." The storm of obloquy, desertion, and censure broke over his head, but he was unmoved, because his proposals were based on principles long held and patiently matured. Of the lodger franchise he had long ago been the "father." An unmitigated household franchise he refused as too "democratic." The "direct taxation" franchise and the "dual vote," which were intended as barriers for the middle classes, he surrendered. That educational franchise which was bound up with a cause that from boyhood had been dear to him ; that "savings-bank" franchise which established the right of industrial thrift to representation, he was forced to abandon, by the clamour of the very party that desired education without religion, and labour as the mere instrument of capital. Looking back impartially, these derided "fancy franchises" seem to me a deplorable loss, and even now it would be well to recognise that the mind and the character should have representative faculties wholly apart from the power of property. Disraeli was forced to cast them overboard that he might preserve the vessel itself during the party hurricane. But the essential qualifications of residence and rateability he maintained in the teeth of Mr. Gladstone, and under all the modifications of the principle which ensued. His mind was fixed to steer between the extremes alike of those who, under the mask of emancipation, purposed the despotism of a single class, and of those who desired to form the government of this country by the caprice of an irresponsible, an unintelligent, and an indiscriminate multitude. And he proved his earnest sincerity by the appeal which closed his speech on the second reading: "*Pass the bill, and then change the ministry if you like.*"

It is not within my province to track the maze of altercations which attended every step of a bill on which Disraeli, contrary to his wont, spoke more than three hundred times, or to raise the dust of controversy this year revived. But, were it so, I could prove how faithful Disraeli remained to the central ideas which had animated him from his youth. So far from having passed a "liberal" measure, he had passed under colossal difficulties, that for which he had long striven,

and in a manner which remedied the defects of 1832 without endangering the repose of the State. Indeed, for the second time he actually re-created the Conservative party, and, to the surprise of some of his friends and all his enemies, discovered in the unknown region of the toilers, with whom he had ever sympathised, whom he had always trusted, but whom the Whigs had driven to revolt, and to whom the "cheapest market" Radicals perpetually begrudged protection, health, and alleviation—discovered, I say, in these elements—the pawns of ignoble partisanship—his truest props of order and of allegiance. The measure and the events of 1884 were to prove the rightness alike of his confidence and of his caution. The counties with a lowered franchise became a prey to agitators. The towns remained staunch and steadfast. And this, though in 1867 Mr. Bright had sneered at Disraeli for having "lugged" his "omnibus" of stupid squires up the hill of democracy.

In his speech of 1859, Disraeli protested against any "predominance of household democracy." He kept his word. Speaking at Edinburgh in the autumn of 1867, he remarked on this very topic—

"... It may be said you have established a democratic government in England, because you have established household suffrage, and you have gone much further than the measures which you previously opposed. . . . Now, I am not at all prepared to admit that household suffrage with the constitutional conditions upon which we have established it—namely, residence and rating—has established a democratic government. But it is unnecessary to enter into that consideration, because we have not established household suffrage in England. There are, I think I may say, probably four million houses in England. Under our ancient laws, and under the Act of Lord Grey, about one million of those householders possessed the franchise. Under the Act of 1867, something more than half a million will be added to that million. Well, then, I want to know if there are four million householders, and one and a half million in round numbers possess the suffrage, how can 'household suffrage' be said to be established in England?"

Thus the proper balance of power, which the bill of 1832 impaired by the exclusion of labour and the enfeeblement of aristocracy, was restored. The people were at last reconciled to their leaders. It had been by accident that the Whigs found themselves arbiters of the national fate in 1832, and it may be conceded that, according to their lights, they honestly did their best. To Lord Grey and his colleagues Disraeli was always just and respectful. But the breach then made demanded the amends which Disraeli had meditated for years. By cancelling qualifications arbitrary and irrational, by conferring political power only in conjunction with social and political responsibility, by regarding society more than the state, and influence than interest, by persistent courage and purpose, this great project succeeded and has endured. The day may come in the process of generations when, as Disraeli has imagined elsewhere, industry may cease to repose upon industrialism alone, and representation may also cease to seem the sole machinery of politics; when enlightenment and public opinion may form a real national conscience; and when leadership may prove itself independent of artificial forms. But till that day arrives, it will be madness in England to give each citizen, irrespective of any qualification but existence, a voice in the Legislature, or entrust them with the sway of an empire. His avowed aim and his accomplished triumph were "to restore those rights which were lost in 1832 to the labouring class of the country," and to "bring back again that fair partition of political power which the old Constitution of the country recognised." A year after its enactment, in his great Irish speech he spoke of it as "a most beneficent and noble Act," and he added that he looked "with no apprehension whatever to the appeal that will be made to the people under the provisions of the Act. I believe you will have a Parliament full of patriotic and national sentiment, whose decisions will add spirit to the community and strength to the State." "Time," which was "Contarini Fleming's" record in the book of "Adam Besso," has proved the fulness of his foresight and the skill of the adjustment.

The mistrust of this great measure at the time, even by men of intelligence, may be justified by the objection that

in the distant future Labour may resume its war against authority in its coming conflict with Capital ; and that a rigid conservatism of defiance is preferable to an adaptive conservatism of development. But whenever that hour strikes, it will be seen that Disraeli's statesmanship has prevented the revolution which a conservatism of defiance must have prepared and entailed. Disraeli will have helped to preserve the English immunity from the violences which mark such upheavals elsewhere. He sought with all his might to quicken Capital into duty, and to hearten Labour by conferring privilege, not as a sop, but as a reward, while, by alleviating misery through creative enactments, he has conservatised Labour and kept it in touch with the national scheme.

It may not, perhaps, have been wholly realised how harmonious Disraeli's utterances respecting the progressive principles of representation in England have been. That is my excuse for treating the subject with insistence, though by no means with completeness. To have done so would risk the exhaustion of the reader as well as of the subject. Disraeli prevented the raid of alien and disruptive democracy from making England a home. Out of the common he extracted the choice. He revived the democracy long inherent in the English Constitution ; he naturalised the democratic idea on the soil of tradition and order ; and thereby he cemented the solidarity of the State and the welfare of the nation. He proved that "progress" is not synonymous with push, and that in going forward it is wise also to look back, lest the goal should be a precipice. Still, long as this disquisition has necessarily been, I may hope that it is not dull, since, in Mrs. Malaprop's aphorism, "I don't think there is a superstitious article in it."

CHAPTER III

LABOUR—"YOUNG ENGLAND"—"FREE TRADE"

IN *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli mocks at the attitude of the early political economists towards Labour in the person of "Mr. Toad," who defined it as "that exertion of mind or body which is not the involuntary effect of the influence of natural sensations." In the second of his long series of election addresses, he promised to "withhold" his support from every ministry which will not originate some great measure to ameliorate the condition of the lower orders, . . . to liberate our shackled industry. . . ." The subject is closely allied to much already surveyed. Here, however, I shall for the most part leave politics alone, and confine myself mainly to the social aspects of the question, for from this standpoint he himself approached it. On Mr. Villiers' resolutions in 1852, he distinctly stated that he and his friends had opposed the repeal of the Corn Laws on the main ground that it would "prove injurious to the interests of Labour;" on the subsidiary ground that it would injure "considerable interests in the country." He had, two years before, urged that it "was a question of labour, or it was nothing." Even in the *Revolutionary Epick*, fifteen years earlier, he had sung, "The many labour, and the few enjoy."

The extracts given in the preceding chapter from Disraeli's speech on Mr. Hume's motion in 1848, illustrate the central ideas which he enforced with singular pertinacity in all his published works and public utterances.

They are mainly these.

It was an age of emancipation, and Peel liberated commerce. In so doing he disjointed Labour. His two great

reforms—that of the Tariff and that of the Corn Laws—designed as inter-remedial, were certainly calculated to disturb and dislocate Labour, the one by unloosing the full forces of straining competition; the other by revolutionising the centres of industry, by transferring population from the country to the city, by impairing the landed interests, both high and low, by shifting the distribution of toil. At the very moment before his relaxation of the Corn Laws, Peel, conscious that he would disorganise Labour,¹ had been unconsciously converted to the “right to physical happiness” system of Manchester—the driest embodiment of the theory of the French “physical” equalitarians, on which I touched in my last chapter. His economics of “cheapness,” the results of which he feared in relation to the distribution of employment, thus became associated with a principle that, as I have shown, demands “unlimited employment of labour.” He freed Commerce, but he unsettled Labour, already rebelling against the harsh workings of the new Poor Laws. Disraeli asked himself if reduced tariffs would augment purchasing power, if dethroned land would be succeeded by any novel power for alleviating the Labour thus unhinged. And, further, he asked whether the middle class of 1846 would not reap the benefit without bearing the burden, just as it had done in the Reform of 1832. What would be the effect of discontent on the institutions of the country? The two great problems during the whole decade of 1830–40, when there had occurred a real renaissance, an awakening, had been Democracy and the Church. Was Democracy to be detached from the order and orders of the State? was it to be an anti-national solvent? And was the Church to realise its mission as a society of believers instead of being perverted into a library of assent? So far Chartism and Apostasy had been the answers. Were Sir Robert Peel’s arithmetical measures, excellent as they were in theory, any practical power for regeneration? Chartism’s inner causes had been both the want of employment and the despair of the employed. In 1840, he proclaimed, to his leader’s dismay, his deep sympathy, not with Chartism, “but with the

¹ Cf. Morley’s “Gladstone,” vol. i. p. 262.

Chartists," preyed on by ambitious leaders, and victimised by official indifference. Throughout he regarded the whole "condition of England" question from its moral and social standpoints—to which economics should be subordinate—as touching Labour at one end and Leadership at the other.

The claims of Labour, he says, are paramount as those of property. Property and Labour should be allies, and not foes; nay, Labour is itself the property of the poor, out of which the property of the rich is accumulated. The gentlemen of England should form the advanced guard of Labour; and, moreover, the master-workmen themselves compose "a powerful aristocracy." So long as property was allied both to land and manufacture, a feeling of public spirit and public duty in the main characterised the large employers. But a financial oligarchy was bound to arise, and has arisen, linked by no visible ties to the workers, and generous more by gifts of "ransom" than by personal participation; a system of commerce, too, without leaders, which now works in groups and merely on "cheapest market" principles, has sprung into being. And, moreover, the vast multiplication of machines tended all along, and tends more and more with the huge increase of intercommunication, to exalt mechanism into life and to degrade the labourer into a machine, himself devoid alike of powers and of duties. Over and over again Disraeli championed, not only the employment of the people, but variety in their employments. He is never wearied of scathing any system which might enhance the grinding monotony of mechanical toil. And all this, while the clamour for material enjoyment rises higher hour by hour; and the labourer is driven, in his hard quest after squalid enjoyments, more into the dark corners of organisations for coercing a State expected to pauperise him, than to philanthropists eager to raise his condition by preaching over his head, before the roof that covers it is decent.

To combat the latter evils—among others—Disraeli started the "Young England Movement," and afterwards protested that the old system of trade reciprocity, with tariffs as levers, had proved a better guarantee for *social* happiness than the retail wealth system of "free imports." At the same

time, as I shall notice, after the repeal of the Corn Laws had cheapened commodities, he was decidedly of opinion that to go back would be too violent an upheaval, unless sanctioned by the deliberate voice of an instructed nation under absolutely new conditions. To forestall the dangers of financial and commercial plutocracy,¹ he planned and supported the many alleviative measures with which his name and Lord Shaftesbury's are connected, in the teeth, be it remembered, of the Radical and Utilitarian opposition ; while he proclaimed in the 'seventies, as he had before proclaimed in the 'fifties, his programme of *Sanitas sanitatum*—Health before Wealth. He foresaw, too, the overcrowding of huge cities through the waste of the soil, with all its attendant miseries ; even so early as 1846 he had urged that "nothing is so expensive as a vicious population ;" and he felt, also, that if life without toil is "a sorry sort of lot," toil without life is an infinitely worse one. Above all, he looked in this matter, as throughout, far more to the regeneration of society than to State interference, so easily evaded and so devitalising. And he lamented the colossal enlargement of the towns, which isolates while it excites.

" . . . In cities," he protests in *Sybil*, "that condition is aggravated. A density of population implies a severer struggle for existence, and a consequent repulsion of elements brought into too close contact. In great cities men are brought together by the desire of gain. They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to the making of fortunes ; and for all the rest, they are careless of neighbours. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbours as ourself ; modern society acknowledges no neighbour." But he descried already a rift in the gloom. "Society, still in its infancy, is beginning to feel its way."

The late 'thirties and early 'forties, with their agitations against middle-class apathy and aristocratic neglect, witnessed to the reality of the disease which was known as the "condition-of-England question." Many of the nobles were not noble ; never had been "so many gentlemen,

¹ Cf. the passage from *The Press*, cited *ante*, p. 7 note, and *post* at opening of Chapter VI.

and so little gentleness.”¹ Exclusion from the suffrage prevented the natural representation of injuries, and compelled Labour to band itself covertly, and often under leaders embittered and embittering with personal and clashing ambitions. The Reform Act, contended Disraeli, had not reposed the government in abler hands, nor elevated the head or enlarged the heart of Parliament. “. . . On the contrary, one House of Parliament” (he is writing in 1845) “has been irremediably degraded into the decaying position of a mere court of registry, possessing great privileges, on condition that it never exercises them ; while the other Chamber, that at the first blush and to the superficial exhibits symptoms of almost unnatural vitality, . . . assumes on a more studious inspection somewhat of the character of a select vestry fulfilling municipal rather than imperial offices, and beleaguered by critical and clamorous millions who cannot comprehend why a privileged and exclusive senate is requisite to perform functions which immediately concern all. . . .”

Undoubtedly Labour is far better situated in 1904 than it was in 1844, and undoubtedly this improvement is partly due to Disraeli’s influence and action. The ideals of “Young England” have borne fruit. Our “Toynbee Halls” and university settlements, the recognition of *noblesse oblige*, the trained public opinion that superior light and leading are in duty bound to lead and enlighten as well as help the poor ; that the poor are their *tenants* ; that—

“Not what we give, but what we share :
The gift without the giver is bare ;”

—these and their tone are its outcome. His policies of health and humanisation, of wholesome housing before technical teaching, for first emancipating Labour from carking cares and then entrusting it with public duties, have prospered. Chartism and its allied mutinies have subsided into citizenship. The artisans of to-day are princes in comparison with what they were. The contracted sloth of the utilitarian middle class has been shaken to follow what emanated from

¹ Bishop Latimer—quoted as motto to *Sybil*.

the universities. In his Guildhall speeches of 1874 and 1875 Disraeli could point with pride to Capital at one with Labour, and to operatives in sympathy with privileges which they shared. At this moment they are catered for as well as cared for; and yet their independence is far completer than when it was aggressive because it was cowed.

But none the less, the fatal overcrowding which he foresaw, the self-divestment by Mammon of direct and immediate responsibilities, has produced a fresh class of the "sweated" and rookieried masses, multiplying the unemployed and—what is worse—the unemployable in compound ratio, and still menacing the physique of the nation. The pressure of poverty is ever with us; of its wretchedness research has indeed called forth a science. As what we deemed the lowest ascends, a fresh depth of distress is always bared to our shame. The democratisation of local government through the county councils has indeed done much, and will do more, for the proletariat; but their lack, with notable exceptions, of high leadership, their tendency to municipal centralisation, their careless and inexperienced prodigality with the public purse, their bias towards pauperisation, their tendency to promote the feverish political ambitions of a class, and sometimes to confuse the cause of industry with that of its captains, remain a danger, though, I believe, a vanishing danger, to the State.

Disraeli's earliest novel—one of the books "written by boys," vague in its restlessness and untamed in its dazzling extravagance, contains in its episode of "Poor John Conyers" the germ of that genuine sympathy with Labour which he afterwards more seriously developed. Apart from his human instincts and from his desire for a real national unity, it was founded on his contempt for the merely mechanical or formal in society; and in 1845, on that tour of experience in Lancashire which brought home to him anew the terrible gulf between "the two nations" of rich and poor, and which the pathos, the humour, the wit and the thought of *Sybil* have immortalised.

Few that have read *Coningsby* will forget the vivid impressions of Manchester machinery in its pages. They are,

perhaps, too familiar for quotation, and I prefer here to cite some sentences from *Sybil*.

“ . . . Twelve hours of daily labour at the rate of one penny each hour ; and even this labour is mortgaged,” groans the loom-worker. “ . . . Then why am I here ? . . . It is that the capitalist has found a slave that has supplanted the labour and ingenuity of man. Once he was an artisan ; at the best he only now watches machines ; and even that occupation slips from his grasp to the woman and the child. The capitalist flourishes, he amasses wealth ; we sink, lower and lower ; lower than the beasts of burthen ; for they are fed better than we are, cared for more. And it is just, for according to the present system they are more precious. And yet they tell us that the interests of Capital and of Labour are identical. *If a society that has been created by labour suddenly becomes independent of it, that society is bound to maintain the race whose only property is labour, out of the proceeds of that other property which has not ceased to be productive.* . . . We sink among no sighs except our own. And if they give us sympathy—what then ? Sympathy is the solace of the Poor ; but for the Rich there is Compensation.

“ You (the nobles) govern us still with absolute authority, and you govern the most miserable people on the face of the globe. ‘ And is this a fair description of the people of England ? ’ said Lord Valentine. ‘ A flash of rhetoric, I presume, that would place them lower than . . . the serfs of Russia or the lazzaroni of Naples.’

“ ‘ Infinitely lower,’ said the delegate, ‘ for they are not only degraded, but conscious of their degradation. *They no longer believe in any difference between the governing and the governed classes of this country.* They are sufficiently enlightened to feel they are victims. Compared with the privileged of their own land, they are in a lower state than any other population compared with its privileged classes.’

“ ‘ The people must have leaders,’ said Lord Valentine.

“ ‘ And they have found them,’ said the delegate.

“ ‘ When it comes to a push, they will follow their nobility,’ said Lord Valentine.

“ ‘ Will their nobility lead them ? ’ said the other delegate. . . .

“‘We have an aristocracy of wealth,’ said the delegate who had chiefly spoken. ‘In a progressive civilisation wealth is the only means of class distinction ; but a new disposition of wealth may remove even this.’

“‘Ah! You want to get at our estates,’ said Lord Valentine, smiling, ‘but the effort on your part may resolve society into its original elements, and the old sources of distinction may again develop themselves.’

“‘Tall barons will not stand against Paixhans’ rockets,’ said the delegate. ‘Modern science has vindicated the natural equality of man.’

“‘And I must say I am very sorry for it,’ said the other delegate ; ‘for human strength always seems to me the natural process of settling affairs.’”

To cherish national unison as a higher form of human harmony than the discordant bond of automatic groups ; to force the governing to sympathise with the governed ; to establish that “Labour requires regulation as much as Property ;” to raise, train, improve and establish labour “rather,” as he wrote in 1870, “by the use of ancient forms and the restoration of the past than by political revolutions founded on abstract ideas,” were Disraeli’s aims. In all except the important one of the last, the means for accomplishing them, Carlyle’s message is the same. There is a passage in *Coningsby* where Disraeli dreams that a day may come when industry will cease to obey mere industrialism. There is another in Carlyle’s “Past and Present”¹ to the same effect. For both, the nobility of labour was a central idea ; for both, the conviction that the cavaliers of England should prove its captains ; for both, *Sanitas sanitatum* was a practical ideal. “Deliver me,” cries Carlyle, “these rickety perishing souls of infants, and let your cotton trade take its chance.” Disraeli and Carlyle alike abominated the doctrine that national happiness consists merely in material wealth. A shared or common wealth of endeavour and influence was a goal for each ; for each, too, the main problem remained,

¹ Book iv. ch. iv. : “. . . To be a noble Master among noble Workers will again be the first ambition with some few ; to be a rich Master only the second.”

"How, in conjunction with inevitable democracy, indispensable sovereignty is to exist."

". . . If there be a change," said Sybil, "it is because in some degree the People have learnt their strength."

"Ah! Dismiss from your mind those fallacious fancies," said Egremont. "The People are not strong; the People never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion. It is civilisation that has effected, that is effecting, this change. It is that increased knowledge of themselves that teaches the educated their social duties. *There is a day-spring in the history of this nation which perhaps those only who are on the mountaintops can as yet recognise. You deem you are in darkness, and I see a dawn.* The new generation of the aristocracy of England are not tyrants, not oppressors, Sybil. . . . Their intelligence, better than that, their hearts, are open to the responsibility of their situation. But the work that lies before them is no holiday work. It is not the fever of superficial impulse that can remove the deep-fixed barriers of centuries of ignorance and crime. Enough that their sympathies are awakened; time and thought will bring the rest. They are the natural leaders of the People, Sybil. . . ."

I may be permitted to point out a likeness and a contrast. The seething ferment on the Continent was pricking Labour into an insurgent materialism which, in the dearth of ancient and active institutions fraught with the balm of healing, leagued itself to attack all forms of authority, kingship and capital alike.

"Ah, the People, this poor King in tatters," wrote Heine from Paris in 1848, "has fallen on flatterers far more shameless, as they swing their censers around his head, than the courtiers of Byzantium or Versailles. These court lackeys of the People incessantly vaunt its virtues and excellences, crying aloud: 'How beautiful is the People! how good is the People! how intelligent is the People!' No, you lie. The People is not beautiful; on the contrary, it is very ugly. But its ugliness is due to its dirt, and will vanish with public baths for the free ablutions of his Majesty. A piece of

soap, too, will do no harm ; and we shall then see a People in the beauty of cleanliness—a washen People. The People whose goodness is thus magnified is not good at all. It is often as bad as other potentates. But its baseness flows from hunger. When once it has well eaten and drunk, it will smile, gracious and well-favoured as the rest. Nor is his Majesty over-intelligent. He is possibly stupider than the others—stupid with the bestiality of his minions ; he will only love or heed the speakers, or howlers, of the jargon of his passions : he hates every brave soul that converses in the speech of reason, and that would ennoble and enlighten him.”

Heine was leading “Young Germany.” A few years earlier, Disraeli was leading “Young England.” The contrast between the atmosphere of the two countries deserves a passing comment. “Young England” aimed at betterment in that very feudal spirit which the poet—the “unfroked Romantic”—by turns breathed and spurned. In Germany the weird medley of the “Romantic School” had for fifty years been striving to awaken the myths, the chivalry, the wistfulness of the past. But its direct influences were merely æsthetic, and mainly sentimental ; while they eventually became actually anæmic—a vague reverie of mediæval moonlight and pallid ghosts. The uprooting French Revolution had swept away both castle and cobwebs, and in Germany the “folk-song” was the sole antiquity to which this Romantic attachment could cling, and by which it could touch the patriotism of a disunited people. But in England, Scott’s “buff-jerkin” revival, at which Carlyle so unjustly scoffed, was more than a literary sport ; it had already braced the nation with the fresh breeze of an invigorating tradition. It brought back and home the inheritance of a real throne and a real nobility, of chivalry, of daring, and of prowess ; it reminded the people that the humblest was once protected by the highest ; and though it perhaps burked or omitted much that disgraced the age of the tournament, the foray, and the cloister, it quickened its best, its most hopeful and most cheerful elements. It took the dry bones from their mouldering tomb and put the breath of life, the wholesome laughter

of humour, and the brightness of beauty into and about their scattered fragments; whereas in Germany the Romantics rather embalmed and buried the living energies of the present in a Gothic mausoleum, weird with wan emblems, and chill and solemn as a cathedral vault.

Disraeli recognised that our country thrives by adaptation and adjustment; that it is the region of natural growth, and not of sudden blossom; of the oak, not the aloe. In interdependence, even more than independence, in the mutual ties of classes, Disraeli discerned the English root for democratic ideas which had all along lurked in the soil. England is great because of that same insular inaccessibility to ideas which repelled Heine. Her slowness of insight vanishes gradually, and not by leaps and bounds—through growth and conduct rather than through universal theories. An idea knocks at our gates for generations before it wins admittance; but when it once enters, it becomes naturalised and ceases to be alien; it becomes actualised; it dwells and walks and votes, and has commerce at large. It becomes part of the popular life and parcel of the national behaviour.

"Young England" prepared the ground for social regeneration. It sought to raise the conditions of labour. It was no rose-water club, but, short-lived as it proved, was a real forerunner of measures. A word, therefore, upon it may be pardoned in this connection. Many in the past century have played the part of "saviours of society." Robert Owen, Ferdinand Lassalle, Napoleon III., Karl Marx, and the eccentric Mr. Urquhart, who furnished some of the *traits* for Disraeli's "Sidonia."¹ But none in this country have been at once so genuine and effective as this association of "Young England;" for, enlisting the enthusiasm of the high and the young, it struck into the roots of national character, without which no development is feasible. Young England aimed further, at rendering leadership sympathetic with labour. It wanted to revive in the lowly a sense of privilege, and in the

¹ "Sidonia" stands for several types in addition to Disraeli's own. "Oswald Millbank" is in part painted from the young Gladstone. Most of the other characters in *Coningsby* are familiarly ascribed to their originals.

noble to quicken higher standards of obligation ; it wished to recall the heroic ; and this it tried to accomplish, not by social disturbance, but by seeking to arouse ancient ideals still slumbering in national traditions. For this purpose it appealed to youth—“the trustees of posterity ;”¹ to the power of personal influence and example ; and above all, it hoped, as I have already noticed, to counteract the soullessness of utilitarianism.

“Ah, yes !” (Disraeli makes Gerard observe in *Sybil*) ; “I know that style of speculation. . . . Your gentlemen who remind you that a working man now has a pair of cotton stockings, and that Harry the Eighth was not so well off. At any rate, the condition of classes must be judged of by the age and by their relations with each other.”

It was also a vigorous protest against that retort of the Liberal on the Radical—the sluggish doctrine of *laissez-faire*, the principle of “stew-in-your-own-juice,” “devil take the hindmost,” “muddling through,” and “let *ill* alone.” Disraeli had combated it from the first :—

“In Vraibleusia” (I quote from his early satire of *Popanilla*) “we have so much to do that we have no time to think—a habit which only becomes nations who are not employed. You are now fast approaching the great shell question ; a question which, I confess, affects the interest of every man in this island more than any other. . . . No one, however, can deny that the system works well ; and if anything at any time go wrong, why, really Mr. Secretary Periwinkle is a wonderful man, and our most eminent conchologist—he no doubt will set it right ; and if by any chance things are past even his management, why, then, I suppose, to use our national motto, *something will turn up*.”

It further served as antidote to the self-complacence and retail outlook of the *bourgeoisie*. The “Middle-Middles,” healthfully and powerfully as they symbolise decency, order, and common sense, too often lack, even in their educated

¹ This phrase he twice repeats ; the first time in that fine speech at the Manchester Athenæum (1844), on the “Acquirement of Knowledge,” which expressed his undying sympathy with the ideals, perplexities, and possibilities of youth.

varieties, perception and sympathy. At present they pervade Parliament, while the Press—which since 1867 appeals more and more to the gallery—controls opinion. Hence the dearth of accord between the prate of Parliament and a nation that realises its unity. Hence springs the momentary decay of Parliament itself—not from party spirit, but from the inanition of parties representing principles, without which party sinks into faction.

Of the anti-middle class attitude of “Young England,” a notable instance occurs in “Angela Pisani,” the brilliant fiction of George Smythe, afterwards seventh Lord Strangford (in Disraeli’s words), “a man of brilliant gifts; of dazzling wit, infinite culture and fascinating manners,” who “could promulgate a new faith with graceful enthusiasm.” The tirade is placed on the lips of Napoleon, denouncing the “puddle-blooded” whom he had “made great men, but could not make gentlemen,” and its reproaches—certainly not characteristic of Disraeli—apply, of course, in an infinitely less degree to England.

The nucleus of “Young England” had begun in a close association of university friends. The Cambridge “Apostles” comprised Tennyson and Hallam, Monteith and Doyle, and “Cool-of-the-evening” Monckton-Milnes. Disraeli, Lord Strangford, and Lord John Manners reinforced this nucleus with Faber, Hope, Baillie Cochrane (afterwards Lord Lamington), and others; they gave them an ampler scope and a longer view, but not without murmuring jealousies. They taught that the spirit of reform transcended its letter, and that the English “romantic school”—just as later on the English pre-Raphaelites in Art—must reseek the fountain-head of original principles. Milnes wrote in 1844: “You must have been amused at the name of ‘Young England,’ which we started so long ago, being usurped by opinions so different and so inferior a tone of thought. It is, however, a good phenomenon in its way, and one of its products—Lord John Manners—a very fine, promising fellow. The worst of them is that they are going about the country talking education and liberality, and getting immense honour for the very things for which the Radicals

have been called all possible blackguards and atheists a few years ago.”

The newer Radical reforms, however, were based on “the greatest happiness” principle of utility; whereas the league of “Young England” was founded on the expansion of traditions, and more especially on the immemorial rights of Labour. What “Young England” really effected was to infuse enthusiasm into institutions. In 1838 this same “Mr. Vavasour” of *Tancred*, and “Mr. Tremaine Bertie” of *Endymion*, had also written: “We have set agoing a new dining club which promises well. Twenty of the most charming men in the universe met last Tuesday. They won’t call it ‘Young England,’ however.” It is no disrespect to the memory of the late Lord Houghton to say that the vague eclecticism of his youth scarcely fostered a robust energy or a keen insight. His “remarks” on *Coningsby* in *Hood’s Magazine* under the name of “Real England” were a sympathetic commentary; but, a born *dilettante*, he “lionised” ideas as he “lionised” genius. He patted intuition on the back. He was the Mrs. Leo Hunter of politics; and he played admirably the part of “Bennet Langton” to Carlyle’s “Dr. Johnson.” He somewhat prattled of “silences” and “eternities.” Well does Disraeli make “Waldershare” in *Endymion* exclaim of him: “. . . What I do like in him . . . is this revival of the Pythagorean system, and heading a party of silence. That is rich.”

Lord Lamington—the “Buckhurst” of *Coningsby*—who in his pleasant glimpse of the movement has supplemented its muster-roll by the names of Borthwick and Stafford, quotes Serjeant Murphy’s pasquinade of “Jack Sheppard.” Its last verse runs as follows:—

“We have Smythe and Hope with his opera-hat,
But they cannot get Dicky Milnes, that’s flat—
He is not yet tinctured with Puseyite leavening,
But he may drop in in the ‘cool of the evening.’”

The “Puseyite leavening” recalls the strictures of Carlyle on the High Church proclivities of a portion of the movement. Coleridge’s great book on the Church had undoubtedly stirred both thought and enthusiasm. Disraeli, as I shall

show hereafter, wished to make the Church a living social regenerator of the "national spirit," to see it at once disciplined and enthusiastic, to restore its original functions, to render it really "Anglican;" and in his old age—strenuously opposed as he ever was to the "mass in masquerade," firmly resolved as he remained to uphold orderly Protestantism—he has outlined at once a portrait and a type of his permanent meaning in the person of "Nigel Penruddock;" just as he has drawn a picture of "Young England" Anglicanism in the "St. Lys" of *Sybil*, the prototype of whom was Faber.

In the spring of 1844, Carlyle thus characteristically addresses Monckton-Milnes—

" . . . On the whole, if ' Young England ' would altogether fling its shovel-hat into the lumber-room, much more cast its purple stockings to the nettles, and honestly recognising what was dead, . . . address itself frankly to the magnificent but as yet chaotic Future, . . . telling men at every turn that it knew and saw for ever clearly the body of the Past to be dead (and even to be damnable, if it pretended to be still alive and to go about in a galvanic state), what achievement might not ' Young England ' manage for us ! " Carlyle was ever a free-thinking Puritan, a creedless Calvinist. "What was dead," "what pretended still to be alive," was the Church of England. . . . It is easy to deride that youthful display of poor metre, but fine enthusiasm, "England's Trust," by Lord John Manners.

*" With Roncesvalles upon his banners
Comes prancing along my Lord John Manners."*

Carlyle misliked in him what he disliked in Scott, the "properties" of Romanticism. But the earnestness of Manners's little volume is beyond question. In the Church it recognises the national recuperative force and salve for anarchy. "We laugh at all commandment save our own," sighs the boyish devotee—

*" Yes, through the Church must come the healing power
To bind our wounds in this tumultuous hour."*

And Labour had ever been the sacred trust of the Church. Divorce Labour from religion, and the State falls. It had

been the fault of the Church herself that Labour had gone out of history, as it were, and crossed over to a more primitive form of true religious fervour under the Methodist revival ; but the Church alone, as a national growth, could hope, if true to its high destinies, for the preservation of the great mass of the populace from the disruptive elements of unbelief. The Church, too, was the natural educator of the people. True, Manners's Anglicanism was that of Laud ; true, also, to that name he rhymes “adored.” But it is also true that the whole brotherhood felt that if the Church, and through it the State, was to be quickened, it must revert, like the State, to its origin ; it must no more be regarded merely as an endowed official or as a consecrated police, but as a divine institution. Moreover, Disraeli also regarded the English Church as the special protectress of popular liberties. I shall return to this subject in its proper place hereafter ; but I may here add that these convictions of “Young England” were vehemently advocated by Disraeli in his speeches on the Irish Church more than twenty years after the “Young England” brotherhood came to an end.

Disraeli always urged the immense importance of parochial life as even greater than political. Had the higher classes understood “the order of the peasantry,” ricks and dwellings would not have been burned down in the 'thirties. In advocating the claims of ancient country-side customs, he raised the plea of humanising ceremony—one certainly cherished by the upper classes for themselves. The people would not, it is true, be “fed” by morris revelries, and they starved equally without them.

It was not to be expected that such a cause, with such a leader, followed by aristocratic youth and attended by the revival of maypole dances and tournaments, should escape ridicule and even suspicion. Grey-headed noblemen, who resented any efforts to render institutions real, and for whom enthusiasm meant vulgarity, shook their heads over the follies of their sons, seduced by the wiles of a designing adventurer. But to such as still doubt Disraeli's sincerity in these matters, and refuse to be convinced by a long chain of after-utterances, I would simply suggest the following fact.

Disraeli's speech of April 11, 1845, on the Maynooth grant¹ broke up the "Young England" association, and terminated his leadership of it. What was the main principle of that speech? It was this: "... You find your Erastian system crumbling from under your feet. . . . I have unfaltering confidence in the stability of our Church, but I think that the real source of the danger which threatens it is its connection with the State, which places it under the control of the House of Commons that is not necessarily of its communion." He denied that the State had ever "endowed" the Church. The Church owned property which was the patrimony of the poor. He argued that since 1829 the State's relation to the Church had altered. He implied, as he often afterwards asserted, that the union of Church and State was for the benefit of the State far more than for that of the Church. Now, this attitude was eminently that of his "Young England" professions. And yet its fearless expression dissolved a gathering which his detractors maintained was used merely as a step to personal advancement.

Carlyle, in the passage above cited, evinced the same irritable impatience that he exhibited in 1849, when he cursed parliamentary institutions because a particular Parliament had over-talked itself. He was an iconoclast who, however, often confused the symbol with the faith that underlies it, and in dethroning the image would have dashed the glamour of its shrine. In 1848—the year of anarchy—Disraeli made a famous speech (the speech which procured him his future leadership of the House). He upheld these institutions while he denounced that very Parliament which moved Carlyle's indignation. The future has proved him right, and the sage wrong. The practical fruits of the future, too, have vindicated the peculiar tinge that Disraeli himself lent to the "Young England" brotherhood.

One closing word on the social aims of "Young England." I may summarise them by the phrase "Health and Home." They compassed the relief of industry, and they implied the

¹ This was the speech in which he said that Gladstone founded "a great measure on a small precedent. He traces the steam-engine always back to the tea-kettle."

effort to shame the knights of industry into some chivalry towards it.

“Pitt,” wisely comments Mr. Kebbel, “ended the quarrel between the King and the aristocracy, and reconciled the Whig doctrine of monarchy with the Whig doctrine of Parliament. Peel accommodated Toryism to the new *régime* established by the Reform Bill, and his name will always be identified with the progress of middle-class reform. *Lord Beaconsfield carried Toryism into the next stage, and made it the business of his life to close up the gap in our social system which . . . had been gradually widening, and to reconcile the working classes to the Throne, the Church, and the Aristocracy.*”

To those who object that beyond Foreign Policy and the last Reform Bill, Disraeli effected little that is lasting, this is the answer. He was prouder of his many social reforms than of his Berlin Treaty. He was a born conciliator. He put a new and powerful leaven into the social lump, and he inspired the generous youth of the country. What he especially sought to mitigate was irresponsible Plutocracy, with a shifting stock of vagrant and unrelated Labour bought in the cheapest market, sold in the dearest ; without stability, without ties, without allegiance.

“‘I am not against Capital’ (he makes “Enoch Craggs” declaim in *Endymion*), ‘what I am against is Capitalists.’

“‘But if we get rid of capitalists, we shall soon get rid of capital.’

“‘No, no,’ said Enoch, with his broad accent, shaking his head and with a laughing eye. ‘Master Thornberry (the Radical) has been telling you that. He is the most inveterate capitalist of the whole lot. . . . Master Thornberry is against the capitalists in land ; but there are other capitalists nearer home, and I know more about them. I was reading a book the other day about King Charles—Charles I., whose head they cut off—I am very liking to that time, and read a good deal about it ; and there was Lord Falkland, a great gentleman of those days, and he said when Archbishop Laud was trying on some of his priestly tricks, that “If he were to have a Pope, he would rather the Pope were at Rome than

Lambeth." So I sometimes think, if we are to be ruled by capitalists, I would sooner, perhaps, be ruled by gentlemen of estate, who have been long among us, than by persons who build big mills, who come from God knows where, and, when they have worked their millions out of our flesh and bone, go God knows where. . . ."

The two river bills carried at Disraeli's instigation in 1852; the twenty-nine bills for ameliorating the position of factory operatives, passed despite those Radicals who predicted ruin for the manufacturer; the Employers and Workmen Acts, the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, the Poor Law Amendment Act, the Commons Act, the Artisans' Dwellings Acts, the Public Health Act, the Rating Act, the Employers' Liability Acts, the Agricultural Holdings Act, among many others, attest the victory of "popular Toryism" over "class Liberalism," and the protection of suffering against selfishness. "Young England," like all Utopian propaganda, was a romantic vision, and exceeded actuality. But in essence it has been eminently practical. Classes (of which England is made) are infinitely more in communion than they were in 1840. The effort to set them by the ears and to oppose the "masses" to the "classes" has ignominiously failed. The Church of England has roused itself to the national needs beyond all comparison with those days. The appeals of *Sybil*, *Coningsby*, and *Tancred*, ridiculed as rodomontade and branded as a charlatan's dodge, have been rendered into action, and stand confessed as the deeply felt and pondered schemes of a poet and a statesman. "When," says Bolingbroke, "great coolness of judgment is united to great warmth of imagination, we see that happy combination which we call a genius." Such has proved Disraeli, and his inmost soul is embodied in that "Young England" which he organised and encouraged in a freezing atmosphere. Over fifty years ago he exhorted youth, at the Manchester Athenæum, as "the trustees of posterity." "The man," he then said, "who did not look up would look down, and he who did not aspire was destined perhaps to grovel." The youth of to-day is far more conscious of its burden than was the youth of any class in the 'forties.

It was mainly on these social grounds that Disraeli resisted that system of free imports which has gone down to history as “Free Trade.” He never denied that it was calculated to enrich manufacturers and manufacturing centres; he grew to admit its benefits to the consumer, although these were by no means wholly due to its action; but he deprecated its “economic frenzy.” He held that it injured the producer¹ and played havoc both with land and distribution of labour. He thought it would eventually impair morale and physique, and sacrifice the general welfare to the material interests of a class; and, before it was nationally adopted, he considered that all ends would have been better served by the adoption of that system of reciprocal treaties²—on a principle called by him “at once national and cosmopolitan”—which was termed “Free Trade” in the days of Pitt, and had been inaugurated in 1713 by the abortive tariff of the great Utrecht Treaty; nor will it now be doubted that if in 1846 a comprehensive scheme of technical education had been set on foot, many of the evils engendered by over-competition would have been avoided, whatever fiscal system this country had chosen.

Writing so early as 1832 to the Wycombe electors, he even then declared: “. . . With regard to the Corn Laws, I will support any change, the basis of which is *to relieve the consumer without injuring the farmer*.” This was not the “Radical” doctrine of those days.

Disraeli has shown conclusively that in English history such a principle as absolute “protection” never existed.

¹ The rise in wages and prices about 1851 was mainly due not to “Free Trade,” but to the influx of newly discovered gold. In 1842, when Peel was revising the tariff, bread was actually cheaper than it had been for many years previously, or till 1849 afterwards. In 1851 corn had sunk to about 40s., nearly 8s. lower than Peel had contemplated as possible. The immediate results of repeal were not the cheapening of bread; but the sudden cheapening of commodities *was* effected by Peel’s revision of the tariff. In 1851, however, all other agricultural produce but wheat was at fair prices, and Disraeli then wrote, “It is possible that agriculture may flourish without a high price of wheat or without producing any” (*Correspondence*, p. 262).

² “. . . A large system of commercial intercourse on the principle of reciprocal advantage.”

The original principle up to the time of Anne was to feed and supply a population then small enough so to be supported at home, and to encourage the wealth and power of trade. He has shown that Walpole, in this respect imitating the rival whom he destroyed, wisely followed this principle in its colonial applications ; though he unwisely divorced productive trade from the land, and set the moneyed against the landed classes, the high finance against the country gentlemen, into whose shoes, however, it soon stepped. He has shown that when the colonial system broke down by the secession of our greatest and worst governed colony, Pitt the Second reverted to the old, the natural principle of exchange with the continent by tariff. The exigencies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars forced an interlude ; and for a time England was fed by foreign corn in free competition with her own—the very time when the loaf was dearest. But Lord Liverpool recurred to the principle ; and Peel up to 1845—when his hand was confessedly forced by the appalling famine in Ireland—was in favour of the varying duties termed the sliding scale, as opposed to the fixed duties of the Whigs and the no-duties of the Radicals. That scale he eventually surrendered under the impulse of Lord John Russell's "Edinburgh Letter," and was suddenly converted by the Manchester School. In logic, and apart from human and national instincts, their theories were as irrefragable as those of our modern bimetallists, and of those ancient economists on whose doctrines they rested. But their lasting usefulness depended on the final achievement of a cosmopolitan confederation. Disraeli presaged with weighty reasons, scouted when they were detailed, that other nations would never fall into the scheme ; he analysed the special conditions of France, Germany, and America. He also foretold, concerning corn, in common with all articles of certain and practically unlimited demand (as cotton and tea, for examples), that "the moment you have a settled market, in exact proportion to the demand, prices will fall. This is the inevitable rule." He pressed further the grave peril, hardly yet realised, of England's dependence on foreign supplies in time of war. But beyond all, he emphasised the

social dangers—the misery for individuals and for classes. In this precipitate measure towards a material class-millennium, he discerned a large element of possible denationalisation, a displacement of labour which must unavoidably deluge the unwieldy towns, and which would to some extent relax the fibre of the nation and weaken its very means of defence, the replacement of excellence by cheapness, and of national welfare by wealth, the substitution for the landed interest which ought to preponderate though never to predominate, not, as seemed for the moment, by a high-toned class of responsible manufacturers, but eventually by an overwhelming clique of irresponsible capitalists with self-interests fluid as their portable property; the decrease of the national, the natural sway of large land-owners inheriting a representative sense of accountability to tenants and dependants; a probably great fall in agriculture and its profits, prices and wages; the waste on a large scale and the depopulation of the soil itself; the special aggravation of ruinous elements in Ireland; an ultimate decay, when foreign competition should develop, of that very manufacturing interest the system was protested to advantage and intended to protect; for he divined already in the 'forties that to fight hostile tariffs with “free imports” could only benefit England while continental manufacturers were in comparative infancy.

Most of this in great measure he foresaw, and in all this has been amply justified. What he did not anticipate was the enormous stature which these developments have now reached. Multitudes of telling instances might be given from those remarkable speeches, the pith and point of which were always how this change would affect the labouring classes. I will single out two alone, and both from that great speech of 1846 on Mr. Miles's amendment, which, in the light of the present, reads like a continuous prophecy. Speaking of the displacement of labour in connection with the then sparse distribution of the precious metals, which he pointed out six years later must again modify the situation owing to the recent and immense discoveries of gold, he said: “. . . Every year and in every market English labour will receive less in return of foreign articles. But gold and silver

are foreign articles ; and in every year and in every market English labour will have less command of gold and silver. . . .” “. . . Supposing you import five millions more from Russia than you ever did before, how will you make your payments, if they take no more additional goods from you than they do now ? . . . I know it will be replied they manage these things by means of bills and so on. But that will not improve the case. Suppose . . . you buy Russian bills on Brazil and New York to the amount of those five millions, and you thus complete your transaction. But you have already supplied the Americans and the Brazilians with as much of your goods as you cared to take, and if you want to sell more to them, you must do so at a great sacrifice. . . .”

Once more, as regards foreign competition. He forecasted that of America ; and in demolishing the argument that Prussia's protective Zollverein was being “shaken ;” he instanced Mecklenburg, induced by English remonstrances to abstain from joining, but now complaining that : “. . . After all the sacrifices we have made, if the Zollverein are to have free importation to England, we have no advantage whatever, and the best thing we can now do is to join and . . . advance the cause of native industry.”

Disraeli resolved that if the repeal became law, the burdens which had been thrown on the land, because of the privileges which were its ancient trust, should in fairness be mitigated ; that it should compete as freely as other manufacturers, for he never ceased to object to a distinction, as manufacturers, between the farmer, the miller, and the mill-owner.

“. . . I know,” he urged in a speech full of dignity and wisdom, “that we have been told that . . . we shall derive from this great struggle not merely the repeal of the Corn Laws, but the transfer of power from one class to another, to one distinguished for its intelligence and wealth—the manufacturers of England. My conscience assures me that I have not been slow in doing justice to the intelligence of that class ; certain I am that I am not one of those who envy them their wide and deserved prosperity ; but I must confess my deep mortification that in an age of political

regeneration, when all social evils are ascribed to the operation of class interests, it should be suggested that we are to be rescued from the alleged power of one class, only to sink under the avowed dominion of another ;” and he concluded with the hope that if the monarchy of England, “mitigated by the acknowledged authority of the estates of the realm,” was to prove “a worn-out dream,” if England was to sink “under the thralldom of capital, . . . of those who while they boast of their intelligence are prouder of their wealth,” if a new force must be summoned to maintain “the immemorial monarchy of England, that “novel power” might be found in “the invigorating energies of an educated and enfranchised people.”

All this has happened. A thralldom to the middle class came into being, and was tempered by Disraeli’s own franchise bill, and by an education act sufficient, though not conceived in the decentralised form which Disraeli desired, but never won the opportunity of effecting. And out of this thralldom is springing that other of plutocracy—one which exercises great political power without assuming great political duties ; one in the interest of which, it seems to me, some of the new fiscal changes now being mooted are designed.

These wholesale changes I cannot but feel that Disraeli would have withstood. Many features in Mr. Chamberlain’s plan would have enlisted his sympathy, but in their entirety he would have thought them hazardous. Some protection for the grazier he might have upheld ; he always laid stress on the importance of home markets. A moderate duty on corn, in partial, though most inadequate, aid of agriculture, he might have favoured as a necessary lever for colonial reciprocity ; especially as it would be spread over the untaxed colonial, the foreign dutiable imports. It would scarcely much affect the price of bread, and the very Peelites forewent the fallacy of the dear loaf ; although, as in 1852, he would show that even a four shilling duty on imported corn could never restore the land to its former footing. “We ought,” he would again argue, “to go to the country on principle, and not upon details. We say we think there should be measures brought forward” (as since have been

brought forward) "to put the cultivators of the soil in a position to allow them to compete with foreign industry." What, however, he then urged with all his force was that the fiscal revolution had confessedly caused vexatious taxes. "Sir," he said in 1852, "I do now and ever shall look on the changes which took place in 1846, both as regards the repeal of the Corn Laws and the alteration of the Sugar Duties, as totally unauthorised. I opposed them . . . *from an apprehension of the great suffering which must be incurred by such a change.* That suffering in a great degree, though it may be limited to particular classes, has in some instances been even severer than we anticipated. But I deny that at any time after those laws were passed, either I, or the bulk of those with whom I have the honour to act, have ever maintained a recurrence to the same laws that regulated those industries previously to 1846." He then showed the difference between Lord Derby's proposed "fixed duty" and the old state of affairs; while he continued: ". . . When we come to this question of fixed duty, . . . I must say now what I said before in this House, that I will not pin my political career on any policy which is not after all a principle, but a measure. Our wish is, that the interests which we believe were unjustly treated in 1846,¹ should receive the justice which they deserve, with as little injury to those who may have benefited more than they were entitled to, as it is possible for human wisdom to devise. *Sir, I call that reconciling the interests of the consumer and the producer, when you do not permit the consumer to flourish by placing unjust taxes upon the producer; while at the same time you resort to no tax which gives to the producer; an unjust and artificial price for his production. . . .*"

But any prohibitive tax on foreign manufactures—that is another matter, one which would protect certain trades at the

¹ The land was promised compensation, but received none worth the name. It was deluded by vague promises of actual benefit under the new system. Peel even asserted that corn would never fall under forty-eight shillings per quarter.

It is often forgotten that in 1843 Peel favoured a preferential tariff for Canada, and that both he and Gladstone were then for Canadian "retaliation" on America.

expense of the community, and aggravate the very evils which Free Trade introduced. Such a system must press all the harder on that class of consumers whose pay would remain unaffected by its results, and who would, in fact, be subsidising our colonies out of their emptied pockets. The sentiment of the colonies he would have prized beyond measure, but other means for riveting it might be found ; and in the undeveloped condition of many among them, would not a Canadian favouritism sow a harvest of jealousies ? Moreover, the colonial population as a whole is still far too scanty for the replacement of our markets abroad ; and further, the two main channels of cheap capital and British prosperity—our carrying trade and London’s commercial position as the clearing-house of the world—might be revolutionised by changes, to which no limit could be fixed. And again, the remission of Income Tax ought in justice to accompany such a system, for that tax was revived by Peel expressly because the revenue had to be reimbursed for its losses on adopting the measures for free imports. With respect to “dumping,”¹ its conditions contain its cure. England, no longer the main workshop of the world, cannot perhaps be so generous as heretofore, but she can still afford to be generous. As for the promise of higher wages through protective duties, wages are more likely to rise through the resumption of gold imports from South Africa ; while the joint result of retaliatory tariffs and such imports would be doubly to enhance the price of commodities for the mass. On the other hand, the vision of a self-supporting empire he would honour, and equally the sincere and commanding zeal of its prophet. But he would surely argue that the times were far from ripe, and that small and gradual beginnings might lay firmer foundations than a colossal combination of incompatibles. Again, he would, as the writer fancies, deplore a loud and unsolicited appeal to the passions of a multitude and the greed of a class easily thus led into a lordship of mob despotism. At the same time, he would certainly recognise, as Mr. Chamberlain

¹ It is only the old evil of over-production and “glut in the market.” While England was still the main manufacturer and exporter, she herself periodically “dumped,” and suffered from the process.

alone has fully recognised, the crying need for a better distribution of employment.

Disraeli over and over again affirmed that since the nation had endorsed this vital change, its reversal was impracticable unless the considered national demand for it became overwhelming. It was one of his cardinal ideas that without such deliberate demand no great change of national policy should be risked in any department. In 1852, he and Lord Derby appealed to the country on a modified issue of this question—that of a fixed duty. The country's answer Disraeli considered as final, even in that regard ; nor, so far as he was able, would he ever permit these momentous issues to be reopened by any party or section. He remained devoted to the reciprocity principle. He believed that "give and take" is the foundation of trade which is barter. But, though he descried rocks ahead in the future, he recognised that the consumer had benefited by the free opening of our ports, that so far as material wealth was concerned, England had become the emporium and the banker of the world. On the other hand, this very prosperity had aggravated the misery of a class and had raised those problems which are still engaging anxious attention. Utilitarianism, the "cheapest market" theory, had triumphed in the establishment of unrestricted competition, but the upshot of that competition was an increasing strain and disorganisation of native labour. With these evils he left the quickened spirit of "Young England" to cope ; while he himself strove to meet them by the remission of the now unjust burdens laid on the land, his industrial franchise bill, and his cherished policy of *sanitas sanitatum*. He had, at any rate, largely influenced the opinion of his generation in bringing home to men's minds and consciences the equality of the rights of Labour with those of property, and the adequacy of constitutional forms to enforce them ; nor did he ever cease to press them in his writings and speeches. But as a statesman he had always to choose between evils ; and of these a forced disturbance of a nationally adopted system, which by hasty expedients might tend to disorder and to dispersal, he ever considered the graver. To experiment he always opposed experience.

Speaking only two years before his death, he said—

“So far as I understand . . . reciprocity is barter. I have always understood that barter was the first evidence of civilisation¹—that it was exactly the state of human exchange that separated civilisation from savagery. . . . My noble friend (Lord Bateman) read some extracts, . . . and he honoured me by reading an extract from the speech I then made in the other House of Parliament. That was a speech in favour of reciprocity—a speech which defined what was then thought to be reciprocity, and indicated the means by which reciprocity could be obtained. I do not want to enter into the discussion whether the principle was right or wrong, but it was acknowledged in public life, favoured and pursued by many statesmen who conceived that by the negotiation of a treaty of commerce, by reciprocal exchange and the lowering of duties, the products of the two negotiating countries would find a freer access and consumption in the two countries than they formerly possessed. But when my noble friend taunts me with a quotation of some rusty phrase of mine forty years ago, I must remind him that *we had elements then on which treaties of reciprocity could be negotiated*. At that time, although the great changes of Sir Robert Peel had taken place, there were one hundred and sixty-eight articles in the tariff which were materials by which you could have negotiated, if that was a wise and desirable policy, commercial treaties of reciprocity. What is the number you now have in the tariff? Twenty-two. Those who talk of negotiating treaties of reciprocity—have they the materials? . . . *You have lost the opportunity*. . . . The policy which was long ago abandoned, *you cannot now resume*. You have at this moment a great number of commercial treaties . . . nearly forty, with some of the most considerable countries in the world . . . in which ‘the most-favoured-nation’ clause is included. Well, suppose you are for a system of reciprocity as my noble friend proposes. He enters into negotiations with a state; he says: ‘You complain of our high duties on some particular articles. We have not many, we have a few left; we shall make some great sacrifice to

¹ A satirical passage in his very early *Popanilla* may be compared.

induce you to enter into a treaty for an exchange of products.' *But the moment you contemplate agreeing with the state, . . . every other of the forty states with 'the most-favoured-nation' clause claims exactly the same privilege. The fact is, practically speaking, reciprocity, whatever its merits, is dead. . . .* The opportunity, like the means, has been relinquished; and if this is the only mode in which we are to extricate ourselves from the great distress which prevails, our situation is hopeless. I should be very sorry to say, whatever the condition of the country, its condition is hopeless. . . ."

"I cannot for a moment doubt that the repeal of the Corn Laws—on the policy of which I do not enter—has materially affected the condition of those who are interested in land. I do not mean to say that this is the only cause of landed distress. There are other reasons—general distress, the metallic changes,¹ have all had an effect. *But I cannot shut my eyes to the conviction that the termination of protection to the landed interest has materially tended to the condition in which it finds itself. But that is no reason why we should retrace our steps, and authorise and sanction any violent changes.* This state of things is one which has long threatened. . . . It has arrived. . . . I cannot give up the expectation that the energy of this country will bring about a condition of affairs more favourable to the *various classes* which form the great landed interest of this country. I should look upon it as a great misfortune to this country that the character, and power, and influence of the landed interest and its valuable industry, should be diminished, and should experience anything like a fatal and a final blow. It would, in my opinion, be a misfortune, not to this country alone, but to the world, *for it has contributed to the spirit of liberty and order more than any other class that has existed in modern times.* . . . But . . . I cannot support my noble friend when he asks us to pass resolutions of this great character, and when he himself disclaims the very ground (*i.e.* protection) on which he might have framed,

¹ These he had long before predicted, and his forecast that they would cause some of the prosperity of manufacture, apart from "Free Trade," has come true.

not what I think was a correct, but a plausible case. *It is a very unwise course, in my opinion, when the country is not in a state so satisfactory as we could wish . . . to propose any inquiry which has not either some definite object, or is likely to lead to some action on the part of those who bring it forward.* It would lead to great disappointment and uneasiness on the part of the country ; and the classes who are trying to realise the exact difficulties they have to encounter . . . *would relapse into a lax state which might render them incapable of making the exertions it is necessary for them to make. . . .* Looking into the state of the country, I do not see there is any great mystery in the causes which have produced a state of which there is undoubted general complaint. What has happened in our own commercial failures during the last ten years will explain it. The great collapse which naturally followed the *convulsion of prosperity* which seemed to deluge the world and not merely this country—the fact that other countries have been placed in an equally disagreeable situation . . . these are circumstances which appear to me to render it quite unnecessary to enter into an inquiry on this subject. . . . I do not mean to say that there are not moments . . . in which an inquiry by Parliament . . . into the causes of national distress may not be allowable—may not be necessary ; but it must be a distress of a very different kind from that which we are now experiencing. We must have the consciousness that the great body of the people are in a situation intolerable to them. . . .”

Compare with this that passage from his late *Endymion*—a novel of memories—where “Job Thornberry” (John Bright) discusses this very problem with the hero.

“‘ . . . But, after all,’ said Endymion, ‘America is as little in favour of free exchange as we are. She may send us her bread-stuffs, but her laws will not admit our goods, except on the payment of enormous duties.’

“‘Pish!’ said Thornberry. ‘I do not care this for their enormous duties. Let me have free imports, and I will soon settle their duties.’

“‘To fight hostile tariffs with free imports,’ said Endymion, ‘Is not that fighting against odds?’

“‘Not a bit. This country has nothing to do but to consider its imports. Foreigners will not give us their products for nothing ; but as for their tariffs, if we were wise men, and looked to our real interests, their hostile tariffs, as you call them, would soon be falling down like an old wall.’

“‘Well, I confess,’ said Endymion, ‘I have for some time thought the principle of free exchange was a sound one ; but its application in a country like this would be very difficult, and require, I should think, great prudence and moderation.’

“‘. . . Ignorance and timidity,’ said Thornberry, scornfully.

“‘Not exactly that, I hope,’ said Endymion ; *‘but you cannot deny that the home market is a most important element in the consideration of our public wealth, and it mainly rests on the agriculture of the country.’*”

To which “Thornberry” retorts that “England is to be ruined to keep up rents.”

At all events, it is here, as elsewhere, evident what led Disraeli to oppose the introduction of unregulated competition. Things have long since marched quickly. The wall of tariffs has not tottered ; Disraeli never imagined that it would. “Foreigners” now do sometimes “give us their products for nothing” through those colossal “Trusts” that make enormous profits at home to undersell us at a loss and capture our markets abroad. Competition has been reduced to the absurd. Nor is the Continent in that plight which marked it when Disraeli uttered the speech above cited. All these changed conditions require changing remedies, but the heroic remedy lately advocated may well occasion thoughtful retrospect, and the speech I have chosen may be profitably pondered in this connection.

And can any reader of his utterances doubt that, had he lived, he would never have left the problem of the housing of the poor to private experiment, or merely municipal omniscience ? Thirty-three years ago he wrote as follows :—

“It is the terror of Europe and the disgrace of Britain,” says “Lothair” of pauperism ; “and I am resolved to grapple with it. It seems to me that pauperism is not so much an affair of wages as of dwellings. If the working

classes were properly lodged, at their present rate of wages, they would be richer. They would be healthier and happier at the same cost. . . .”

I will conclude with an excerpt from Disraeli's great Crystal Palace speech of 1872. It concerns the remedies which he had from the first determined to apply to a state of things which the rush of so-called “progress” had induced.

“. . . It must be obvious to all who consider the condition of the multitude with a desire to improve and elevate it, that no important step can be gained unless you can effect some reduction of their hours of labour and humanise their toil. The great problem is to be able to achieve such results without violating those principles of economic truth upon which the prosperity of all States depends. You recollect that many years ago the Tory party believed that these two results might be obtained . . . and at the same time no injury be inflicted on the wealth of the nation. You know how that effort was encountered, how these views and principles were met by the triumphant statesmen of Liberalism. They told you that the inevitable consequence of your policy was to diminish capital ; and this, again, would lead to the lowering of wages, to a great diminution of the employment of the people, and ultimately to the impoverishment of the kingdom. . . . And what has been the result ? Those measures were carried ; but carried, as I can bear witness, with great difficulty and after much labour and a long struggle. Yet they were carried ; and what do we now find ? That capital was never accumulated so quickly ; that wages were never higher ; that the employment of the people was never greater, and the country never wealthier. I ventured to say a short time ago (*at Manchester*) that the health of the people was the most important subject for a statesman. It is . . . a large subject. It has many branches. It involves the state of the dwellings of the people, the moral consequences of which are not less considerable than the physical. It involves their enjoyment of some of the chief elements of nature—air, light, and water. It involves the regulation of their industry, the inspection of their toil. It involves the purity of their provisions, and it touches upon all the means by which you may wean

them from habits of excess and brutality. . . . Well, it may be the 'policy of sewage' to a Liberal member of Parliament. But to one of the labouring multitude of England, who has found fever always to be one of the inmates of his household—who has, year after year, seen stricken down the children of his loins, on whose sympathy and support he has looked with hope and confidence ; it is not 'a policy of sewage,' but a question of life and death. And I can tell you this, gentlemen, from personal conversation with some of the most intelligent of the labouring class, that . . . the hereditary, the traditionary policy of the Tory party that would improve the condition of the people, is more appreciated by the people than the ineffable mysteries and all the pains and penalties of the Ballot Bill. . . . Is that wonderful? Consider the condition of the great body of the working classes of this country. They are in possession of personal privileges—of personal rights and liberties—which are not enjoyed by the aristocracies of other countries. Recently they have obtained—and wisely obtained—a great extension of political rights ; and when the people of England see that under the Constitution of this country . . . they possess every personal right of freedom, and according to the conviction of the whole country, also an adequate concession of political rights, is it at all wonderful that they should wish to elevate and improve their condition, and is it unreasonable that they should ask the Legislature to assist them in that behest, as far as it is consistent with the general welfare of the realm? . . ."

The crucial problem still exacts, though it need not baffle, solution. We are still waiting for the complete answer to the question here propounded by Disraeli.

CHAPTER IV

CHURCH AND THEOCRACY

"THE equality of man," exclaims Disraeli in *Tancred*, "can only be accomplished by the sovereignty of God. The longing for fraternity can never be satisfied but under the sway of a common Father . . . announce the sublime and solacing principle of theocratic equality."

This is a Semitic idea ; but, then, so is the Church. The State, on the other hand, is an Aryan conception. The real religion both of Athens and of Rome was the State. These radical ideas of Church and State, to which we have grown so accustomed, are, in fact, the products of special races and the salvage of the centuries. The Romans invented "Empire," the Athenians "Democracy," the Jews created "Theocracy."

It may be interesting to inquire how this idea of a spiritual *Church*—a colony from the unseen and eternal—has been in constant conflict with that other dominant idea of the *State*; and how, among the nations, England alone has made any serious or successful attempt to reconcile them. For these are the ideas, expressed or implied, of Disraeli. I take the liberty of illustrating these ideas afresh in my own manner, and in continuous commentary, rather than by considering isolated passages scattered through his books and speeches, many of which I shall quote later on. And the standpoint marked by the title of this chapter is the point of view which seems to me to distinguish the many varieties of the theme which he presents, and which evidently fascinated him.

A *national* Theocracy has always been rejected in the

West. The Roman Church, whose ideal is an international Theocracy under an imperial form, is in essence anti-national and cosmopolitan ; and for this very reason it became repugnant to those Northern races whose genius makes for nationality and independence. Moreover, it is unable itself to flourish without the temporal appanage of a *State* ; and it therefore tends to become an *imperium in imperio*. On Western soil religion is unable to thrive as a living force unless aided by the equipments of the *State*, which the instinct of the West evolved, and to which it is prone ; while a non-organised, inorganic creed can no more make a *Church*, which is a society of believers, than a paper constitution can make a *state*, which is the community individualised.

A *national* Theocracy failed also in the East because the faculty for creating a *State* was deficient. When once Theocracy, pure and simple, vanished from Palestine—"the fatherland of the Spirit"—Israel and Judah were confronted by their inherent inability to found a *State*. It was this, indeed, which gave rise to the Messianic hope, a hope which yielded to daily motherhood the consecration of divine destiny. For to lend an effective earthly sanction to the theocratic ideal, to reconcile without violence the government of a community under the Eternal and Invisible with the progress of a community under a visible chieftain, a perfect monarch, the founder of a golden age, was required—a theocrat king. The Jewish polity was a *Church*. All European churches, on the contrary, are polities. This is well recognised by Professor Ewald,¹ who proves that the *State*, as such, took no root and found no real place in Palestine. The tentatives towards a *State* conflicted with the native theocratic ideals of race aspiration, and failed to survive them. And when at length the Incarnation displayed the "Perfect King," whose "kingdom was not of this world," but "within you," and whose Kingship was "without observation," it was the very anti-nationalism of His teaching at a period when Rome had tinged Palestine with Western politics that perplexed or offended a perverse caste of fanatics athirst

¹ "History of Israel," vol. iv. p. 286.

for national unity, although national independence had crumbled away. When, once more, the Apostle to the Gentiles laid the Pauline foundations of an international Christian Church, the Jewish nationalism, despite the sublime prophecies of Isaiah, grew doubly embittered, and closed its ears to that theocratic message, which was, in fact, the fulfilment of its highest aspirations.

For the ideal of the early Christian Church was undoubtedly an *international Theocracy*. On this very account it disgusted the Roman patriotism which despised it. But directly it became acclimatised in the West, and prevailed, it also underwent that modification of theocratic ideals which the West always entails. It threw itself into the mould of the *State*. It assumed the purple of the Cæsars; it "sent forth its dogmas like legions into the Provinces."

This only happens in Europe; in the East religions are never politicised. The West seeks the tangible and turns to myth the wonders that are literal to the Eastern mind. In so far as the old Egyptian belief was in the priestly power, it may perhaps be termed oligarchical, but not in the Western sense. The Church of Buddha is a spiritual brotherhood, never a *State*. Islam, like that from which it sprang, is a Theocracy without any inherent organisation. Like it, it eventually chose a monarchical headship; and, like it too, its monarchy came to be cleft in twain. It is, I repeat, only in the West that creeds are politicised. As the earthly sanctions for Christianity coarsened through the centuries, it became at once Cæsarian and cosmopolitan. But the warfare between the so-called secular and spiritual powers, which, indeed, forms the history of the earliest Middle Ages, soon began to impair its birthright of cosmopolitanism. The invincible bias towards nationality of the Northern races asserted itself.

Dante, it is true, dreamed of a real Theocracy. But he was a strong champion of a monarchical State. He staked his hopes on that great Emperor—that "patriot king"—whose premature death dashed his vision to the ground. And after Dante, Savonarola craved a real Theocracy; but it again assumed that Republican shape which, two centuries

later, was to play a greater, though as futile, a part in England. The Church one way or another throughout Europe perpetually tended towards becoming "a State within the State," a "King of kings;" and in this regard it is not a little curious that the present Oratorians still obey the antique Florentine Constitution which St. Philip of Neri transcribed and embalmed as the rule of his order. In the same way the early American Episcopalians brought with them, in their three-yearly Conventions, that Triennial Parliament which William of Orange grudgingly granted to the Tories, and which Walpole was afterwards to repeal for the Whigs. Once more, the Pilgrim Fathers brought the ideal of Republican forms to America; but Republican forms soon passed into democratic facts. From Jemima Wilkinson to Mormonism and Christian science, sects and sectaries have abounded. No religious vagary has lacked its audience and its franchise. America exemplifies the disadvantage of lacking a national comprehensive Church in a country whose aspirations are national. Early in the seventeenth century the Presbyterians persecuted the Quaker immigrants with a ferocity of which Torquemada might have been proud; but in their turn the American Presbyterians eventually fell a prey to their own factions. While she was still a British colony, England unwisely forced on America bishops consecrated at home; but these very bishops were themselves rejected admittance by persecuting Presbyterians, who regarded Episcopalians as Jacobites, and taunted them as Papists. It was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that persistently sought to remedy the gross anomaly of the Bishop of London being the Bishop of America.

The Reformation in England was in its essence a national protest against internationalism. Out of it flowed the notion of a *national Church* like a "national party" (a contradiction in terms but a most remarkable actuality), which it, in common with France, theoretically justified as prior to Roman usurpation. Our Church is one at once rooted in the soil as a civil institution, a source of parish life, a security for local government, a bar at once to oligarchy and bureaucracy, against the

exclusion of the many from public life,¹ the trustee of an estate which enables all to become proprietors of the soil, which is, as Disraeli termed it, "the fluctuating patrimony of the great body of the people;" and it is also by inheritance one paramount in the country as a spiritual authority, an educator, a social regenerator, and a mainspring of that tolerance and religious liberty which the great Whig party secured for our country. As Disraeli has pointed out repeatedly, the union of Church and State means the hallowing of the civil power, the investment of secular authority with religious sanction, the loss of which the State would be the first to feel and regret, should the bond be severed.

England, then, is the only nation that has reconciled through compromise the spiritual ideas of Theocracy with the dominant forms of the *State*.

But the English Church, headed by the English king, was soon faced by Puritanism; and of this phase Disraeli, through his father's history, was a deep student.

Puritanism was cradled among small traders, conscious of their virtues, but socially ill at ease. It at once became terribly at ease in the courts of Zion. It began with a retail outlook, and it soon politicised its creed. It became eminently republican, nor was it ever democratic. Instinctively counter to all forms, whether "temporal" or "spiritual," it aimed at the destruction both of Monarchy and the Church, and yet it set up an exclusiveness of its own. The Jewish Theocracy had, as I have pointed out, broken down even under that monarchical shape which suited it, just because its outward *State* apparatus was mechanical and out of touch with the development of national life. The finer spirits of Puritanism—and they were very fine—had these features to reckon with. Cromwell, like Savonarola, compassed an impracticable solecism. He desired a Republican Theocracy. His scheme only chimed with that of the Church which he sought to ruin in this, that he too wished religion to be nationally organised—to be political. But the result was an intolerant fanaticism of mutually persecuting sects, and a Parliamentary

¹ That the Church was "a main obstacle to oligarchical power," Disraeli pointed out as early as in his *Runnymede Letters*.

ensorship of morals which cramped, nay, imprisoned self-developing virtue, confounded holiness with austerity, and furnished the best argument for a "national Church."

Milton, who tempered the Puritanic fire with the Renaissance light, who, in his youth, was a worshipper of the subdued loveliness of the Church and "her dim, religious light," came to regard our national Church as merely, in his own phrase, "an anti-papal schism." Like Cromwell, he longed to destroy it.

"It is a rule and principle," he urges,¹ "worthy to be known by Christians, that no Scripture, no, nor so much as any ancient creed, binds our faith or our obedience to any Church whatsoever denominated by a particular name; far less if it be distinguished by a several government from that which is indeed Catholic. . . . It were an injury to condemn the papist of absurdity and contradiction for adhering to his Catholic Romish religion, if we, for the pleasure of a king and his public considerations, shall adhere to a Catholic English." Milton only wanted republican instead of monarchical forms. Politics were still the setting of religion. He was even more inconsistent. He deprecated any discipline by the State, although his Church was a political Church, and although Cromwell's purposes are contradicted by Milton's very deprecation." "If we think"—who can forget this fine passage from his "Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing"?—"if we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to men. No music must be set or sung but what is grave and Doric. . . . I hate a pupil-teacher; I endure not an instructor that comes to me under the wardship of an overseeing fist." How did Milton relish the Independents as "pupil teachers," or the "overseeing fist" of the Fifth-Monarchy men, or the wardship of the Reign of Saints? Milton wants neither the Church as a Polity, nor the State as a Church. Not staying to inquire what fits the genius of England and her national traditions and customs, he seeks a Theocracy which is untheocratic, and a national republic doomed to fall when the perfect ruler is removed.

¹ Answer to "Eikon Basilike."

"When," he indignantly exclaims!¹—"when God shakes a kingdom with strong and healthful commotions to a general reforming, it is not untrue that many sectaries and false teachers are then busiest in seducing, but yet more true is it that God then raises to His own work men of rare abilities and more than common industry, not only to look back and revise what hath been taught heretofore, but to gain further and to go on some new enlightened steps in the discovery of truth." So, then, a reformed commonwealth, and no visible Church are Milton's ideals.

"The Parliament of England," he protests, had turned "regal bondage into a free commonwealth." "All Protestants," he proceeds, "hold that Christ in His Church hath left no vicegerent of his power, but Himself without deputy is the only head thereof, governing it from heaven." So far Milton announces pure Theocracy; but the leaven of his classical republicanism is disclosed in the next sentence: he cannot divorce religion from politics. "How, then, can any Christian man derive his kingship from Christ? I doubt not but all ingenuous and knowing men will easily agree with me that a free commonwealth, without a single person or House of Lords, is by far the best Government, if it can be had." And then he propounds grand councils of a perpetual senate, safeguarded against "any dogeship of Venice,"² as the means to save the State. "The whole freedom of man," he says, "consists either in spiritual or civil liberty." No rule for the first is admitted by him but the Scriptures; for the second he takes the Dutch model of the United Provinces. But he neglects to consider how liberty can be settled without order, or order without discipline, or discipline without authority, or authority without creed.

Even the loftiest Puritan ideal of Theocracy, therefore, was no less political than that of the Church.

A very few years witnessed the complete breakdown of a system which sought to blend the early Latin and the early Semitic ideals together in unnatural alliance, and disregarded the native bias of Great Britain.

¹ "The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Commonwealth."

² Here we find an early beginning of "the Venetian oligarchy."

The ensuing reaction rendered the English Church more political than ever. She was split into contending partisanship for contending dynasties. She repudiated James the Second, but not the Stuarts. Under William of Orange latitudinarianism, even her latitudinarianism, was militant. But under the two first Georges she grew torpid and time-serving. The rash and rabid Sunderland, the astute Walpole, parodied the old Miltonic ideals in their zeal for indifferentism, and in self-defence the Church tended temporarily to seem the mere stipendiary of the State, like an excise officer. But Wesley in England, and Whitefield both here and in America, re-aroused the Church to the higher and holier ideals of a *national* Theocracy. Some century later the Tractarian movement spurred her energies afresh, and they have since been once more quickened in the battle with mechanical materialism.

But all along it has been a sheer necessity in England—a necessity for spiritual as well as civil *freedom*—that the State should lend its earthly sanction of *order* to the Church. A *national* Church so uncontrolled is impossible in England, where politics tinge every form of aspiration. For international Theocracy, for that “millenary year” which is the magnificent ideal of Romanism, the times are unripe. It must remain a remote goal so long as the competitive egoism of nations, transfiguring the baser egotism of individuals and of mere races, is paramount.

The Church State has been unrealisable. England alone has realised the State Church. The former has been impossible in the West, owing to the Aryan genius for State development, and especially to the national instinct of the Anglo-Saxon family. With the British spirit a cosmopolitan religion is incompatible. No nation ambitious of being a world-power can revert to Theocracy. It is not feasible under such conditions.

The latter, however, the Anglican Church, has reconciled these two concepts of opposite origins, the Oriental idea of a “Church,” and the Occidental idea of the State. For it is not only a religious, but a national and a social tradition.

This, I take it, was Disraeli’s attitude. By temperament

he was theocratic. He believed in the original spirituality of his race ; but he also believed in the great destiny of the nation to which he belonged, and in her Church he descried the naturalised power of Semitic ideas, the only form in which they could become nationally operative, the sole political means in a political country of sanctifying the secular. "The Church," he once said, "is one of the few great things left." The Church ever found him a wise and enthusiastic supporter. The fact is, as he put it in a speech of 1860, "the Church is a part of England." Nor would he ever allow that mere differences of opinion negatived her comprehensiveness. She was still Anglican. What he recoiled from was the hard-and-fast narrowness of Puritanism, the fiercer fanaticisms of which, he always maintained, had undone Ireland. Sectarianism is not strength, for strength resides in national discipline. He regarded a "national Church" as the best pledge for religious liberty to even those outside her communion, as a national refuge from bigotry and a national rampart against priestcraft.

The Church's "nationality" is proved even by the peculiar character of her property. It is territorial. It is (as he emphasised in a speech of 1862) "... so distributed throughout the country, that it makes that Church, from the very nature of its tenure, a national Church ; and the power of the Church of England does not depend merely on the amount of property it possesses, but in a very great degree on the character and kind of that property. Then I say that the Church, deprived of its status, would become merely an *episcopal sect* in this country. And in time, it is not impossible it might become an insignificant one. But that is not the whole, nor, perhaps, even the greatest evil, that might arise from the dissolution of the connection between Church and State, because in the present age the art of government becomes every day more difficult, and no Government will allow a principle so powerful as the religious principle to be divorced from the influences by which it regulates the affairs of a country. What would happen ? . . . The State of England would take care, after the Church was spoiled, to enlist in its service what are called the ministers

of all religions. They would be salaried by the State, and the consequences of the dissolution of the alliance between Church and State would be one equally disastrous to the Churchman and to the Nonconformist. It would place the ministers of all spiritual influences under the control of the civil power, and it would in reality effect a revolution in the national character. . . ."

De Tocqueville has proved that the French clergy were the staunchest upholders of civil liberty before the Revolution ; but he has also acutely shown that the Roman priesthood, devoid of domestic ties, looks to the Church as its sole fatherland, unless it can itself become a proprietor of the soil. The French Revolution disempowered it for that purpose, and evicted it from its heritage. The English clergy, on the other hand, are linked to civil life both by the land and the home. Contrast for one moment the landscape of a French village with that of an English, and the difference becomes typified. In the one the church stands aloof and dominates the hamlet. In the other it nestles among the cottages, and helps the daily life around it.

What was present to Disraeli's mind was not only that, in such a case, the ancient landmarks of parish life, the ancient trusts of education, the ancient equality of social intercourse between clergy and laity, the ancient duties and intimacies, the ancient openness to the poorest of career in the Church and of residence on the land, would be swept away ; but that, as he expressed it when discussing the "Cowper-Temple Amendment" in 1870, "you will not entrust the priest or the presbyter with the privilege of expounding the Holy Scriptures . . . *but for that purpose you are inventing and establishing a new sacerdotal class.*" "My idea of sacerdotal despotism," he said in 1863, "is this, that a minister of the Church of England, who is appointed to expound doctrine, should deem that he has a right to invent doctrine. That . . . is the sacerdotal despotism I fear. . . ." The State would suffer ; and it would suffer doubly. Not only would religion cease to be an official element of order, but the ministers of religion might be unduly strengthened in civil affairs—might be over-politicised. "Whether that is a result

to be desired," he remarked ten years afterwards, "is a grave question for all men. For my own part, I am bound to say that I doubt whether it would be favourable to the cause of civil and religious liberty."

In his novels he emphasises his belief that society is inconceivable without religion, and that "without a Church there can be no true religion, because otherwise you have no security for the truth," although he also distinguishes between differing "orthodoxies" and real religion. At the same time, the Church as a polity must have dogmas—"No Church, no creed"—"no dogmas, no deans, Mr. Dean." The human craving, the passionate instinct for religion, he ever based—from the date of *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy* to that of *Coningsby* and *Tancred*, and from that of *Tancred* to that of *Lothair*—on the fact that "*man requires that there shall be direct relations between the created and the Creator, and that in those relations he should find a solution of the perplexities of existence.*"—"The brain that teems with illimitable thought will never recognise as his Creator any power of nature, however irresistible, that is not gifted with consciousness. . . . The Church comes forward, and without equivocation offers to establish direct relations between God and man. Philosophy denies its title and disputes its power. Why? Because they are founded on the supernatural. What is the supernatural? Can there be anything more miraculous than the existence of man and the world? Anything more literally supernatural than the origin of things? The Church explains what no one else pretends to explain, and which every one agrees it is of first moment should be made clear."

Of the two passions which moved Disraeli, the one for mastery, the other for the mysterious, the last was perhaps the strongest. The mysteries that fascinated him were real, and did not render him a mystic, still less a quietist. It is a mistake so to regard him. His strength alike and his weakness resided in the practical energy of his imagination. The whole of existence was for him a standing miracle. "*Contarini*" finds his fate by a vision in a church; "*Venetia*" receives a miraculous answer to her prayer of agony. He delights to depict, even in the short biography of his father, providential

coincidences. What is deemed bizarre in his works, is really the sense of magic wonder in all we experience. His irony, too, contrasting show with substance and words with things, works by paradox.¹ That man is a spirit on earth was his firm conviction. We find it accentuated from his earliest utterances to his latest. ". . . There are some things I know," said the Syrian in *Lothair*, according with the Syrian in *Tancred*, "and some things I believe. I know that I have a soul, and I believe that it is immortal. . . ."² The riddle of life is not to be solved by theories, however true or ingenious of the processes of development, still less by the fashionable "prattle of protoplasm," or the glib triflers with their "We once had fins, we shall have wings." He was quite sincere and consistent in his famous "Ape or Angel" dilemma. He believed, both passionately and dispassionately, that man was divine. Science confesses that its discoveries are merely of recurrent facts called laws; it does not profess to account for them.

"Science may prove the insignificance of this globe in the scale of creation," said the stranger, "but it cannot prove the insignificance of man. What is the earth compared with the sun? A mole-hill by a mountain; yet the inhabitants of this earth can discover the elements of which the great orb exists, and will probably, ere long, ascertain all the conditions of its being. Nay, the human mind can penetrate far beyond the sun. There is no relation, therefore, between the faculties of man and the scale in creation of the planet which he inhabits. . . . But there are people now who tell you there never was any creation, and therefore there never could have been a creator."—"And which is now advanced with the confidence of novelty," said the Syrian, "though all of it has been urged, and vainly urged, thousands of years ago. There must be design, or all we see would be without sense, and I do not believe in the unmeaning. As for the

¹ These paradoxes, like "Sidonia's," have been constantly proved true. I may mention a fantastic description of a sculptured Eastern cavern, which recent discovery has confirmed.

² Cf. *Vivian Grey*. This idea is derived from Bolingbroke's philosophical works.

natural forces to which all creation is now attributed, we know that they are unconscious, while consciousness is as inevitable a portion of our existence as the eye or the hand. The conscious cannot be derived from the unconscious. Man is divine. . . . Is it more unphilosophical to believe in a personal God omnipotent and omniscient, than in natural forces unconscious and irresistible? Is it unphilosophical to combine power with intelligence? Goethe, a Spinozist who did not believe in Spinoza, said he could bring his mind to the conception that in the centre of space we might meet with a monad of pure intelligence. Is that more philosophical than the truth first revealed to man amid these everlasting hills," said the Syrian, "that God made man in His own image?" . . . "It is the charter of the nobility of man . . . one of the divine dogmas revealed in this land; not the invention of councils, not one of which was held on this sacred soil; confused assemblies first got together by the Greeks, and then by barbarous nations in barbarous times." — "Yet the divine land no longer tells us divine things," said "Lothair." "It may, or may not, have fulfilled its destiny," said the Syrian. "'In my Father's house are many mansions,' and by the various families of nations the designs of the Creator are accomplished. God works by races,¹ and one was appointed in due season, and after many developments, to reveal and expound in this land the spiritual nature of man. . . ."

This quotation may suffice, though many others, even from the biography of Lord George Bentinck, might have been offered. These ideas are perhaps best summarised in the Preface to *Lothair*. Disraeli really believed in the sacredness

¹ A very favourite idea of Disraeli's, and the source of his disbelief in any "equality of man." Cf. "All is race" in *Coningsby*, and the passage already quoted in my second chapter from *Contarini Fleming*. So again in the Preface to *Lothair*, "One of the consequences of the Divine government of this world, which has ordained that the sacred purposes should be effected by the instrumentality of various human races, must be occasionally a jealous discontent with the revelation entrusted to a particular family. . . . The documents will yet bear a greater amount both of erudition and examination than they have received; but the Word of God is eternal, and will survive the spheres."

of the Syrian soil and air, the peculiar genius of the Semite for communion with God, as of the Hellene for communion with nature and origination of art ; in the special religious revelation vouchsafed to Semites alone and consummated in Christianity, which he ever held was the fulfilment of Judaism. The dogma of the Atonement he received literally. It was a divine mystery enacted by a prince of Israel. Disraeli's sense of mystery was, let me repeat, literal, and never explained through emblems. There was nothing of Gothic symbolism in his nature. From these convictions flowed his sanguine confidence in himself and his mission ; in destiny, which he has himself said may be but the exertion of our own will. From these flowed his sympathy with the heroic, his turn for the adventurous ; his disrelish, too, of modern rationalism, modern materialism,¹ and even of modern metaphysics.² From these flowed his faith in the revelations of conscience—"I worship in a Church where I believe God dwells, and dwells for my guidance and my good ; my conscience ;"³ in a word, from these flowed his bias towards a natural Theocracy. But, as I have already said, he recognised that the English Church had alone, as the depository of these *racial* ideas, attuned them to the *national* refrain of England, embodied them in living Western flesh. Just as for him Government meant organised authority, and Party organised opinion, so the Church meant organised belief ; nor did he ever cease to point out that if the national Church were disestablished, if that form of Protestant religion,

¹ " . . . What is styled Materialism is in the ascendant. To those who believe that an Atheistical society, though it may be polished and amiable, involves the seeds of anarchy, the prospect is full of gloom."

² " . . . Let us at length discover that no society can long subsist that is based upon metaphysical absurdities. . . . Before me is a famous treatise on human nature by a Professor of Königsberg. No one has more profoundly meditated on the attributes of his subject. It is evident that in the deep study of his own intelligence he has discovered a noble method of expounding that of others. Yet when I close his volumes, can I conceal from myself that all this time I have been studying a treatise upon the nature—not of man, but of a German?"—*Contarini Fleming*.

³ The hackneyed *mot* of "Sensible men never tell" is derived from *Voltaire*.

resting on popular sympathies and popular privileges, which had grown with the growth of England and had leavened her life, her civil society, her public education, and even her pastimes, were divorced from the principle of authority, not only might the competition of sects cause a bigoted intolerance, but the State itself would certainly be the loser.

I will choose another most pertinent passage from his speech on the Irish Church Bill, delivered in March, 1869. He had discussed "disendowment," and he opposed it with all his might, as the plunder of the Church in English history had always gone into the coffers of the land, although it was a trust for the poor.

"Now, sir," he continued, with regard to disestablishment, "I myself am much opposed to it, because I am in favour of what is called the union between Church and State. What I understand by the union of Church and State is an arrangement which renders the State religious by investing authority with the highest sanctions that can influence the sentiments, the convictions, and consequently the conduct of the subject; while, on the other hand, that union renders the Church—using that epithet in its noblest and purest sense—political. That is to say, it blends civil authority with ecclesiastical influence; it defines and defends the rights of the laity, and prevents the Church from subsiding into a sacerdotal corporation. If you divest the State of this connection, it appears to me that you necessarily reduce both the quantity and the quality of its duties. The State will still be the protector of our persons and our property, and no doubt these are most important duties for the State to perform. But there are duties in a community which rather excite a spirit of criticism than a sentiment of enthusiasm and veneration. All, or most of the higher functions of Government—take education, for example, the formation of the character of the people, and consequently the guidance of their future conduct—depart from the State and become the appanage of religious societies, of the religious organisations of the country—you may call them the various Churches, if you please—when they are established on what are called independent principles."

After welcoming the fact of a religious revival, he next continues:—

“When we have to decide whether we can dissociate the principle of religion from the State, it is well to remember that we are asked to relinquish an influence that is universal. We hear in these days a great deal of philosophy. Now, it is my happiness in life to be acquainted with eminent philosophers. They all agree in one thing. They will all tell you that, however brilliant may be the discoveries of physical science, however marvellous those demonstrations which attempt to penetrate the mysteries of the human mind, wonderful as may be these discoveries, greatly as they have contributed to the comfort and convenience of man, or confirmed his consciousness of the nobility of his nature—yet all those great philosophers agree in one thing—that in their investigations there is an inevitable term where they meet the insoluble, where all the most transcendent powers of intellect dissipate and disappear.¹ There commences the religious

¹ In the Preface to *Lothair* he says:—“The sceptical efforts of the discoveries of science, and the uneasy feeling that they cannot co-exist with our old religious convictions, have their origin in the conviction that the general body who have suddenly become conscious of these physical truths are not so well acquainted as is desirable with the past history of man. Astonished by their unprepared emergence from ignorance to a certain degree of information, their amazed intelligence takes refuge in the theory of what is conveniently called Progress, and every step in scientific discovery seems further to remove them from the path of primæval inspiration. But there is no fallacy so flagrant as to suppose that the modern ages have the peculiar privilege of scientific discovery, or that they are distinguished as the epochs of the most illustrious inventions. No one for a moment can pretend that printing is so great a discovery as writing, or algebra as language. What are the most brilliant of our chemical discoveries compared with the invention of fire and the metals? It is a vulgar belief that our astronomical knowledge dates only from the recent century, when it was rescued from the monks who imprisoned Galileo. But Hipparchus, who lived before our Divine Master . . . discovered the precession of the equinoxes; and Copernicus . . . avows himself as only the champion of Pythagoras. . . . Even the most modish schemes of the day on the origin of things . . . will be found mainly to rest on the atom of Epicurus and the monad of Thales. Scientific, like spiritual truth, has ever from the beginning been descending from heaven to man. . . .” So, too, in a speech of 1861, dealing both with science and the higher criticism, “Epicurus was, I apprehend, as great a man as Hegel; but it was not Epicurus who subverted the religion of Olympus.”

principle. It is universal, and it will assert its universal influence in the government of men. ' Now, I put this case before the House. We are asked to commence a great change. . . . When, therefore, we are called to the consideration of these circumstances, it is absolutely necessary that we should contemplate the possibility of our establishing a society in which there may be two powers, the political and the religious, and the religious may be the stronger.¹ Now I will take this case. Under ordinary circumstances, a Government performing those duties of police, to which it will be limited when the system has perfectly developed, the first step to which we are called upon to take to-night—such a Government, under ordinary circumstances, will be treated with decent respect. But a great public question, such as has before occurred in this country, and as must periodically occur in free and active communities—a great public question arises, which touches the very fundamental principles of our domestic tranquillity, or even the existence of the Empire ; but the Government of the country, and the religious organisations of the country, take different views, and entertain different opinions on that subject. In all probability the Government of the country will be right. The Government in its secret councils is calm and impartial, is in possession of ample and accurate information, views every issue before it in reference to the interests of all classes, and takes, therefore, what is popularly called a comprehensive view. The religious organisation of the country acts in quite a different manner. It is not calm ; it is not impartial ; it is sincere, it is fervid, it is enthusiastic. Its information is limited and prejudiced. It does not view the question of the day in reference to the interests of all classes. It looks upon the question as something of so much importance—as something of such transcendent interest, not only for the earthly, but even for the future welfare of all her Majesty's subjects—that it will allow no consideration to divert its mind and energy from the accomplishment of its object. It, therefore, necessarily takes what is commonly called a contracted view. But who can doubt what will be the result, *when on a question which enlists*

¹ Probably always in England. In France the reverse is happening.

and excites all the religious passions of the nation, the zeal of enthusiasm advocates one policy, and the calmness of philosophers and the experience of statesmen recommend another. The Government might be right, but the Government would not be able to enforce its policy, and the question might be decided in a way that might disturb a country or even destroy an empire. I know, sir, it may be said that though there may be some truth in this view abstractedly considered, yet it does not apply to the country in which we live, because . . . we enjoy religious freedom . . . and because only a portion of her Majesty's subjects are in communion with the National Church. I draw a very different conclusion to that which I have supposed as the objection. . . . It is because there is an Established Church that we have achieved religious liberty and enjoy religious toleration ; and without the union of the Church with the State, I do not see what security there would be either for religious liberty or toleration. No error could be greater than to suppose that the advantage of the Established Church is limited to those who are in communion with it. Take the case of the Roman Catholic priest. He will refuse—and in doing so he is quite justified, and is indeed bound to do so—he will, I say, refuse to perform the offices of the Church to any one not in communion with it. The same with the Dissenters. It is quite possible—it has happened, and might happen very frequently—that a Roman Catholic may be excommunicated by his Church, or a sectarian may be denounced and expelled by his congregation ; but if that happens in this country, the individual in question who has been thus excommunicated, denounced, or expelled, is not a forlorn being. There is the Church, of which the Sovereign is the head, which does not acknowledge the principle of Dissent, and which does not refuse to that individual those religious rites which are his privilege and consolation. . . . Now, I cannot believe that the disendowment of the Church of England could occur without very great disturbances. . . . England cannot afford revolution. England has had her revolutions. It is indeed because she had revolutions about two hundred years ago, before other nations had their revolutions, that she gained her great start in wealth and empire. Now,

sir, what have we gained by these revolutions? A period of nearly two hundred years of great sérénity and the secured stability of the State. I attribute these happy characteristics of our history to the circumstance, that in this interval we did solve two of the finest and profoundest political problems. We accomplished complete personal, and, in time, complete political liberty, and combined them with order. We achieved complete religious liberty, and we united it with a national faith. These two immense exploits have won for this country regulated freedom and temperate religion. . . . Speaking now not as a partisan, I believe the Tory party, however it may at times have erred, has always been the friend of local government, and that *the instinct of the nation made it feel that on local government political freedom depended.*"¹

"It is said," he remarked three years afterwards, after commenting on the historical union between Church and State—"two originally independent powers," and the fact that their alliance has prevented the spiritual power from "usurping upon the civil and establishing a sacerdotal society," as well as the civil power from invading "the rights of the spiritual," and from degrading its ministers into "salaried instruments of the Government."—"It is said," he continued, "that the existence of Nonconformity proves that the Church is a failure. I draw from these premises an exactly contrary conclusion; and I maintain that to have secured a national profession of faith with the unlimited enjoyment of private judgment in matters spiritual is . . . one of the triumphs of civilisation." Nonconformity he considered a misfortune, though it was a symptom of national freedom. With Nonconformists, however, he sympathised. It was with indifference that he warred.

Let me illustrate these points. In an earlier speech he

¹ This idea is, among other speeches, worked out in that delivered at Amersham, December 4, 1860, where he says: "The parish is one of the strongest securities for local government, and on local government mainly depends our political liberty." He points out that the Church is not oligarchical, and does not claim those exclusive privileges which the Nonconformists often do. It is national in its comprehensive ties with the country and its inclusiveness. The abolition of the parish system would alone prove a national and social upheaval.

addresses himself to prove that the Church is none the less truly national because millions of the nation are not in communion with it ; and he analyses Nonconformity.

“ Now, the history of English Dissent will always be a memorable chapter in the history of the country. It displays many of those virtues for which the English character is distinguished—earnestness, courage, devotion, conscience. But one thing is quite clear, that in the present day the causes which originally created Dissent no longer exist ; while—which is of still more importance—there are now causes in existence opposed to the spread of Dissent. I will not refer to the fact that many—I believe the great majority—of the families of the descendants of the original Puritans and Presbyterians have merged in the Church of England itself ; but no man can any longer conceal from himself that the tendency of this age is not that all creeds and Churches and consistories should combine—I do not say that, mind—but I do say that it is that they should cease hereafter from any internecine hostility ; . . . and therefore, so far as the spread of . . . mere sincere religious Dissent is concerned, I hold that it is of a very limited character, and there is nothing in the existence of it which should prevent the Church of England from asserting her nationality. For observe, the same difficulties that are experienced by the Church are also experienced by the Dissenters, without the advantage which the Church possesses in her discipline, learning, and traditions.”

Part of these “ difficulties ” he considered in the later speech, above cited, where he holds that the existence of parties in the Church is a sign of vigour ; but the other part, the growth of indifferentism among millions of the populace, he considers here, and he considers it as affording a great field for the Church if it be true to its great traditions and answers to the temper of the times and to the call of the summons. “. . . If, indeed, the Church of England were in the same state as the pagan religion was in the time of Constantine ; if her altars were paling before the Divine splendour of inspired shrines, it might be well indeed for the Church and its ministers to consider the course that they should pursue ; but nothing of the kind is the case. With the

indifferentists you are dealing with millions of a people the most enthusiastic, though not the most excitable, in the world. And what awakes their enthusiasm?

" . . . *The notes on the gamut of their feeling are few, but they are deep. Industry, Liberty, Religion, form the solemn scale. Industry, Liberty, Religion—that is the history of England.*" He predicts a feeling of exaltation for religion similar to those enthusiasms for freedom and toil which have inspired the nation in recent periods, and he harps on the opportunity for a Church with a tradition of "the beauty of holiness." "What a field for a corporation which is not merely a Church, but . . . the Church of England; blending with a divine instruction the sentiment of patriotism, and announcing herself as the Church of the country;" which may realise its nationality by increasing her hold on the education¹ of the people, "though it is possible there may be fresh assaults and attacks upon the machinery by which the State has assisted the Church in that great effort;" by extending the Episcopate (which has happened); by developing the lay element in the administration of her temporal affairs; by fulfilling the right of visitation both by priest and parishioner, and maintaining those parochial privileges which are still inviolate both in town and country; by remedying the gross inequality of stipend (which remains to be done); by, so far as possible, relying on the Church itself, and not resorting to the Legislature.

With respect to indifferentism among the more enlightened classes, it is "agnosticism," partly due to the scientific spirit on which I have touched; partly to that "higher criticism" which Germany originated, and which, it is clear, can only modify the views of an educated few. With the mild rationalism of "Essays and Reviews," Disraeli dealt characteristically. He found them "at the best a second-hand medley of contradictory and discordant theories." Thirty years earlier he had satirised those devout Christians who do not believe in Christianity. As in the march of Science he perceived nothing new, and held that it interpreted the imagery without sapping the

¹ This policy was pressed by Peel in the early 'forties, and led to the fine work of the National Schools.

foundations of belief, so with regard to the "Teutonic rebellion" against inspiration, he saw only repeated in another form, and with no more ability, the Celtic "insurrection" which distinguished the eighteenth century: both had their uses. "Man brings to the study of oracles more learning and more criticism than of yore; and it is well that it should be so." Nay, the very development of the German theological school proves its ephemeral character.

"About a century ago" (he observed in 1861) "German theology, which was mystical, became by the law of reactions critical. There gradually arose a school of philosophical theologians which introduced a new system for the interpretation of Scripture. Accepting the sacred narrative without cavil, they explained all the supernatural incidents by natural causes. This system in time was called Rationalism. . . . But where now is German Rationalism, and what are its results? They are erased from the intellectual tablets of living opinion. A new school of German theology then arose, which, with profound learning and in exorable logic, proved that Rationalism was irrational, and successfully substituted for it a new scheme of scriptural interpretation called the mythical.¹ But if the mythical theologians triumphantly demonstrated . . . that Rationalism was irrational, so the mythical system itself has already become a myth; and its most distinguished votaries, in that spirit of progress which, as we are told, is the characteristic of the nineteenth century, and which generally brings us back to old ideas, have now found an invincible solution of the mysteries of human existence in a revival of Pagan pantheism."

This he defined elsewhere as "Atheism in domino." Since Disraeli's death the German school has made further strides. There has been a brisk export of fresh theories "made in Germany." We are now told that the Old Testament is Babylonian, and that the New springs out of Aryan ideas; and side by side with this *tour-de-force* of paradox, an orgy of anarchical hysteria threatens the sanctions of authority, the secular as well as the spiritual. Disraeli would probably meet it by what he retorted in the 'sixties, that when the periodical

¹ That of Strauss.

deluge subsides, the ark is seen resting at the summit of the mountain.

But if education was to be secularised, might not the ark be chopped up for firewood? Education was a problem that, in its private and public aspects, engrossed Disraeli from his youth. In the second of two election addresses at High Wycombe in the memorable year 1832 he had announced: ". . . By repealing the taxes upon knowledge, I would throw the education of the people into the hands of the philosophic student, instead of the ignorant adventurer." He believed that its current principles were constantly wrong—that words were taught instead of ideas, and grammar studied instead of character; and he was also a great advocate of the wisdom of steeping the youth of a nation in national literature. It was a keen disappointment to him that he was deprived of the occasion of settling—partially, at any rate—the problem of national education, and he considered that the less it was fettered by direct State interference and the more it was helped by State support, the better. He was persuaded that any national system ought to be religious. For the Church's original training of the people, for her alliance with the Universities, too, he had the keenest admiration.

"Nothing is more surprising to me," he urged in 1872, "than . . . that in the nineteenth century the charge against the Church of England should be that Churchmen, and especially the clergy, had educated the people. . . . I think the greatest distinction of the clergy is the admirable manner in which they have devoted their lives and fortunes to this greatest of national objects."¹

It may not be generally remembered that only two years after Disraeli entered the House of Commons he delivered himself of a remarkable speech in this connection. He was opposed, he said, at that time to a strictly State system, for he was opposed to "paternal government, which stamped out the sense of independence in man, and caused him to rely

¹ In the Croker Papers will be found a masterly letter from Sir Robert Peel on the importance of the Church rising to her educational opportunities. It was Peel's foresight that produced the National Schools. Peel, though latitudinarian, was a Church statesman.

upon others." Society should be strong, and the State weak ; order should not be disturbed by national injustice, nor liberty by popular outcry. "*It is always the State and never Society—always machinery and never sympathy.*" But though he did not change the principles of his outlook, he came by experience very materially to change his view of the machinery by which they were to be applied. He detested the interferences of centralisation ; but a doubled population and the overgrowth of cities rendered State measures imperative, and their absence a disgrace. In his Edinburgh speech, twenty-eight years later, he thus handled this national need : ". . . Ever since I have been in public life I have done everything I possibly could to promote the cause of the education of the people generally. I have done so because I always felt that with the limited population of this United Kingdom, compared with the great imperial position which it occupies with reference to other nations, it is not only our duty, but . . . an absolute necessity, *that we should study to make every man the most effective being that education can possibly constitute him.* In the old wars there used to be a story that one Englishman could beat three members of some other nation. But *I think if we want to maintain our power, we ought to make one Englishman equal really in the business of life to three other men that any other nation can furnish.* I do not see otherwise how . . . we can fulfil the great destiny that I believe awaits us, and the great position we occupy.

It will be noticed that he forecasts the practical and technical requirements which, at a period of comparative commercial decline, we are only now beginning to take to heart.

"Therefore," he resumed, "so far as I am concerned, whether it be a far greater advanced system of primary education—whether it be that system of competitive examination which I have ever supported, though I am not unconscious of some pedantry with which it is associated—or whatever may be the circumstances, I shall ever be its supporter."

He kept his word. Leading the Opposition in 1870, he supported Mr. Forster's great measure, though he strongly opposed the Cowper-Temple Amendment—one which has undoubtedly kept much religious acrimony alive. His speech

on these clauses can still be studied with advantage. In 1854, Lord John Russell introduced his bill for the "good government of the University of Oxford." Here, again, Disraeli objected to undue Government interference. He thought that this "great seat of learning" should deal with these problems itself independently, and in the spirit of the age. It was designed to create professors on the Prussian model. Disraeli showed that in Prussia there was then small "sphere for the genius, the intellect, the talent, and the energy of Germany, except in the professorial chair." There were not then great opportunities for a public career in Germany. "In this country you may increase the salaries as you please ; but to suppose that you can produce a class of men like the German professors is chimerical. . . . We are a nation of action, and you may depend upon it that, however you may increase the rewards of professors . . . ambition in England will look to public life. . . . You will not be able, however you think you may, to lay your hand upon twenty-five or thirty professors suddenly, capable of effecting a great influence on the youth of England. You cannot get these men at once. It will be slowly, with great difficulty, by fostering and cultivating your resources, that you will be able to produce one of these great professors—a man able to influence the public opinion of the University. Whether, then, you look to the great change which you propose with respect to these private halls, which is in fact a revolution of the collegiate system ; or whether you look to the great alteration you contemplate by the revival of the professorial instead of the tutorial system—on both points you will meet, I think, with disappointment. . . . If I were asked, 'Would you have Oxford, with its self-government, freedom, independence, but yet with its anomalies and imperfections ; or would you have the University free from those anomalies and imperfections and under control of the Government ?' I would say, 'Give me Oxford free and independent, with its anomalies and imperfections.'"¹

¹ I may add that what Disraeli resented in Gladstone's thwarted proposals for his Catholic University scheme was that it sought to exclude theology and philosophy—an exception unworthy of any "*Universitas rerum*," and deeply repugnant to the Catholics.

In the discipline of the Church itself also Disraeli eventually found it imperative for the State to interfere. With extreme Ritualism, with amateur popery in an alien camp, effctely and sometimes treacherously practised, till the insubordination of a few, who were not in any sense strong men or leaders, began to infect the many, Disraeli could not sympathise. The Mass of the Roman Church as a solemn act he could reverence, but not the "masquerade" of amateur ultramontanes. With the High Anglicans, with the Tractarians, he in many respects sympathised profoundly. Their movements were those of noble aspiration and high endeavour. But most of the ultra-Ritualists were of wholly different calibre. Their attitude he typified most humorously in *Lothair*, and in the person of the "Reverend Dionysius Smylie," who was wont to observe, "Rome will come to *me*." Moreover, the Church had passed rapidly through varying vicissitudes. In the late 'thirties and early 'forties there had been a signal revival; but the secession of Newman, "apologised for but never explained," had proved a blow under which "the Church still reels." She lost a great, a generous, a necessary leader, when a leader was her need. "If," Disraeli wrote in 1870, "a quarter of a century ago, there had arisen a Churchman equal to the occasion, the position of ecclesiastical affairs in this country would have been very different from that which they now occupy. But these great matters fell into the hands of monks and Schoolmen. . . ."

In the 'fifties there was some degeneration, and the revival of Convocation was not on the wider basis which might have quickened clerical energy and lay enthusiasm. In the 'sixties the Church began to be "in danger." Radicalism and Ritualism united; and there is a manuscript letter of Disraeli, still extant, written at this period, and affording some very interesting and secret knowledge.

What Disraeli disliked and regretted was that the choice between faith and free thought should be more and more presented as one between the Roman purple and the "Red Republic."

And this brings me to the consideration of Disraeli's ideas regarding the Latin Church, the immortal Rome, "that great

confederacy which has so much influenced the human race, and which has yet to play perhaps a mighty part in the fortunes of the world."

This imperial form of Theocracy exercised for him, both imaginatively and historically, an enormous attraction. Its special appeal to the Latin and Celtic races; its unbroken phalanx of organisation; its immemorial persistence of policy; its creative combination of spirituality with art, of purity with beauty; its union of ideals beyond and above the world with the mechanism of empires; its blend of contrasts, of solemn softness with sombre control, of charm with coldness, of callousness with charity, of loneliness with society, of curse and comfort; its theoretic espousal of theological free will with the practical denial of it in action, and of outward pomp with inward simplicity; its watchful intimacies with every moment of life—the way in which, as he puts it in *Contarini*, it ". . . produces in" its "dazzling processions and sacred festivals an effect upon the business of the day;" its guardianship of the weak, the erring, and the poor; its nursing motherhood of doubt and despair; its insidious captivation of the will and intellect; its power to recall and continue the spirits of the centuries, to absorb schism and rebaptise it union; its claims to obliterate the past for the penitent; to keep all things old and make all things new; its great deeds and its great heroes; these elements and many more, that have cooped Jews in Ghettos while blazoning the proud inscription in front of St. Peter's, *Vicit Leo de tribu Juda*,—all these opposites enchant even when they fail to enchain the mind and the feelings. They have linked the Vatican and the Palatine, the see to the throne, the tiara to the diadem. They have transfigured, while maintaining, pagan rites and customs, till "Madre Natura" reappears with a halo, the very shrines of the Madonna repeat the antique pattern of those dedicated to the Lares and Penates, and the procession of waxen images in Southern Italy but perpetuates another and an older ceremony. The Roman Church has been the most consistent educator, the greatest organiser, the most universal legislator of the last thousand years. It has attained uncompromising ends unswervingly pursued by

compromises the most subtle and the most skilful. Nor is the esoteric doctrine which recalls the Eleusinian Mysteries, and enables the initiated to regard forms comprehensible by the multitude as merely popular symbols of higher truths, without a certain glamour of its own. Disraeli's father had penned a treatise on the Jesuits, and their history had been deeply studied by the son. I can still recall the unconscious tone of ironical appreciation with which one of those "professors," "capable of effecting a great influence on the youth of England," informed me that when he met Disraeli, "he spoke to me of the Jesuits." Both the two factors in himself which I have mentioned, the sense of mystery and the impulse to control, are precisely the atmosphere of the Papal Church. There was, therefore, to some extent the attraction of affinity. But the Papacy appealed to him imaginatively, not theologically, as it did to his great rival. I recollect being told by a member of the symposium that Gladstone once discussed deep into the night at Hawarden what form of Christianity would eventually survive and prevail. Three chosen friends agreed with him that it would be Romanism, the establisher and not the establishment, the supernational and not the national, theocratic and not (as Disraeli makes one of his characters describe the Church of England) "parliamentary Christianity."

Not so Disraeli. Its political influences, its "clamour for toleration," its "labour for supremacy,"¹ its warping limitations, its prying priestcraft, its humble haughtiness, its casuistic candour, its centralising forces fatal to Northern liberty, the ban placed on free discussion and free intercourse, its proclamation of the uniformity rather than of the unity of human nature, and above all its admixture of paganism, were the drawbacks that repelled him. "The tradition of the Anglican Church was powerful," he observes, adverting to that "mistake and misfortune" of Newman's desertion. "Resting on the Church of Jerusalem, modified by the divine school of Galilee, it would have found that rock of truth which Providence, by the instrumentality of the Semitic race, had promised to St. Peter. Instead of that, the seceders

¹ Letter to D. O'Connell, 1835.

sought refuge in mediæval superstitions which are generally the embodiments of pagan ceremonies and creeds.”¹

The spell of Romanism is an incident in *Contarini Fleming*. The spell, but also the perils of Romanism, its bewitchment of judgment and of conscience, its repugnance to free politics and independent wills, its arrogance of inspiration, its monopolies, its burdens of enjoined etiquette, form the theme of *Lothair*. He cannot bind himself to the danger, yet how adorable is its source! How firm the rock on which it is founded, when it is not of offence! How certain the conclusions, if only the premises can be conceded!

“Religion is civilisation,” said the Cardinal—“the highest: it is a reclamation of man from savageness by the Almighty. What the world calls civilisation, as distinguished from religion, is a retrograde movement, and will ultimately lead us back to the barbarism from which we have escaped. For instance, you talk of progress: what is the chief social movement of all the centuries that three centuries ago separated from the unity of the Church of Christ? The rejection of the Sacrament of Christian matrimony. The introduction of the law of divorce, which is, in fact, only a middle term to the abolition of marriage. What does that mean? The extinction of the home and household on which God has rested civilisation. If there be no home, the child belongs to the State, not to the parent. The State educates the child, and without religion, because the State in a country of progress acknowledges no religion.² For every man is not only to think as he likes, but to write and speak as he likes. . . . And this system which would substitute for domestic sentiment and Divine belief the unlimited and licentious action of human intelligence and will, is called progress. What is it but a revolt against God?”

What religious intelligence would not endorse these truths! But let us now listen to the other side, that of “other-worldliness,” of “the conversion—or conquest of

¹ This has been elaborately developed by Bolingbroke in his “Philosophical Works.”

² How true this has now proved itself in France!

England," though the allusions to "Corybantic Christianity" are not without justice.

"There is only one Church and one Religion," said the Cardinal; "all other forms and phrases are mere phantasms, without root or substance or coherency. Look at that unhappy Germany, once so proud of its Reformation. . . . Look at this unfortunate land, divided, subdivided, parcelled out in infinite schism, with new oracles every day, and each more distinguished for the narrowness of his intellect or the loudness of his lungs; once the land of saints and scholars, and people in pious pilgrimages, and finding always solace and support in the Divine offices of an ever-present Church; which were a true, though a faint type of the beautiful future that awaited man. Why, only three centuries of this rebellion against the Most High have produced . . . an anarchy of opinion, throwing out every monstrous and fantastic form, from a caricature of the Greek Philosophy to a revival of Feticism. . . . The Church of England is not the Church of the English. Its fate is sealed. It will soon become a sect, and all sects are fantastic. It will adopt new dogmas, or it will abjure old ones; anything to distinguish it from the Non-conforming herd in which nevertheless it will be its fate to merge. . . ."

"I cannot admit," replied the Cardinal, "that the Church is in antagonism with political freedom. On the contrary, in my opinion, there can be no political freedom which is not founded on Divine authority; otherwise it can be at the best but a specious phantom of licence inevitably terminating in anarchy. The rights and liberties of the people of Ireland have no advocate except the Church, because there political freedom is founded on Divine authority; but if you mean by political freedom the schemes of the illuminati and the Freemasons, which perpetually torture the Continent, all the dark conspiracies of the secret societies, then I admit the Church is in antagonism with such aspirations after liberty; those aspirations, in fact, are blasphemy and plunder. And if the Church were to be destroyed, Europe would be divided between the atheist and the communist."

This last opinion is Disraeli's own. None knew better, or

realised more, the disintegrating terrors of the secret societies, the propaganda of desperation served by desperadoes and exploited by soldiers of fortune.

Disraeli appreciated and often testified that Roman Christianity had pre-eminently spiritualised the once undecayed Latin races. To its services and ideals he always paid the deepest homage; for some of them he displayed an evident affection. Nowhere has the higher aspiration of Romanism been portrayed more touchingly than in the person of "Clare Arundel." The description in that book of the *Tenebræ* vibrates with delicate emotion. In the same book he foresees the erection on the site of slums of the stately fane which now adorns Westminster. His public utterances on Ireland, on the Maynooth question, and many others, his ardent championship of the bill which secured the offices of his priest for the Catholic prisoner, showed not only respect, but a sympathy and conversance with Roman affairs passing that of ordinary statesmen. But, as a statesman, he also realised that the Roman Church was not only hostile to the Anglo-Saxon instincts, but has always claimed a despotic temporal dominion; and he also realised not only the earlier and far-reaching designs of Cardinal Wiseman, but the later diplomacies of a definite scheme for the capture, now that absolutism is on the wane, of democracy. Rome means to be the sole absolutism that shall survive. What Disraeli dreaded and countervailed was the new-fangled alliance, not only between Radicalism, but between Liberalism and Romanism. In Ireland, as I shall show, a peculiar phase of the design was apparent, and what Rome had manœuvred she came to deplore and even to struggle to prevent. In *Lothair*, "Monsignor Berwick," Antonelli's ultramontane disciple, is made to say of "Churchill," the leader of Irish Nationalism, "For the chance of subverting the Anglican establishment, he is favouring a policy which will subvert religion itself."

In later times the famous encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, Monsignor Ireland and the "Knights of Labour" in America, Cardinal Manning and the London Dock strikers, are an evidence that Disraeli's insight was sound.

The people as a *Civitas Dei*—the Church-State—is a

superb ideal, one with which Disraeli was in heartfelt accord. But under what *national* forms is this to be compassed in England? A desire that Anglican orders should be confirmed by the Bishop of Rome has been during the last few years publicly advanced by dignitaries of our own Church. Is the Roman system capable of satisfying the progressive demands of the masses in England? Though their sordid homes need purifying, will they ever tolerate the intrusion of their privacy by celibate priests? Is a doctrinal absolutism, which the people themselves have dethroned from political ascendancy, likely to consummate the cosmopolitan dream? State socialism divorced from ecclesiastical dominion would never for one moment enlist the Pope. And if some form even of State socialism ever became national (and Disraeli could have withstood it to the death), how could Catholic socialism control the socialism of the State? Can the supreme voice of God brook the admonitions of the voice of the people?

Lothair treats more especially of the diplomacies of Rome, and perhaps the polite struggle at "Muriel Towers," between the Cardinal and the Bishop for the hero's soul, is one of Disraeli's most finished pieces of humour. "The Anglicans have only a lease of our property, a lease rapidly expiring," ejaculates "Monsignor Berwick." This imminent expiry of the lease is undoubtedly a cherished hope of the Vatican and Sacred College.

"Lothair," it will be remembered, himself an earnest if somewhat ineffectual youth, falls under the influence of "Lady St. Jerome," whose houses are rallying-centres for the great Cardinal and his associates. "Lady St. Jerome" induces "Lothair" to attend the office of the *Tenebræ*. He is told that nothing in this particular service can prevent a Protestant from attending it. This is followed by the master-gardener, "Father Coleman's" comments on the adoration of the Cross in the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified, and a picnic with "Miss Arundel" and the courtly "Monsignor Catesby." "The Jesuits are wise men; they never lose their temper. They know when to avoid scenes as well as when to make them." "Lothair," under the banner of his heroine, "Theodora," fights

for Garibaldi and the "Madre Natura" against the Papal troops. He is wounded at Mentana, and, by a coincidence, tended by "Clare Arundel" and her Roman circle. On his recovery, a miracle is announced concerning his rescue. The Virgin has interposed to save a defender of the Faith. He is led to a great function in the sacristy of St. George of Cappadocia. He finds himself the centre of devout attraction. The Cardinal assures him that the miracle is true. "Lothair" indignantly protests and denies. The Cardinal maintains that there are two "narratives of his relations with the battle of Mentana." "If I were you, I would not dwell too much on this fancy of yours about the battle." . . . "I am not convinced," said "Lothair." "Hush!" said the Cardinal; "the freaks of your own mind about personal incidents, however lamentable, may be viewed with indulgence, at least for a time. But you cannot be permitted to doubt of the rest. You must be convinced, and, on reflection, you will be convinced. Remember, sir, where you are. You are in the centre of Christendom, where truth, and where alone truth resides."

Nobody for one moment would believe that the illustrious Archbishop of Westminster debased strategy to stratagem; or could under any circumstances have resorted to a deliberate lie. *Lothair* is a satirical fairy-tale, and "Cardinal Grandison" is only an outward semblance of the late Cardinal Manning. But this passage sheds a true light on Rome's attitude towards doubt, and her methods of proselytising; it shadows her secular policy. Can any one deny that "the truth with a mental reserve" of Jesuitry composes much of the plot in the drama of the hierarchy? Moreover, the passage agrees with a very remarkable one in a distinguished French novel that appeared three years afterwards—"L'Abbé Tigrane," by M. Fabre. Long after these events, when "Lothair" comes of age, his guardian, the same Cardinal, converses with him on the impending Œcumenical Council. The duologue contains a forcible summary of the Church's infallibility, however fallible may seem her individual members:—

"The basis on which God has willed that His revelation

should rest in the world is the testimony of the Catholic Church, which, if considered only as a human historical witness of its own origin, constitution, and authority, affords the highest and most enduring evidence for the facts and contents of the Christian religion. If this be denied, there is no such thing as history. But the Catholic Church is not only a human and historical witness of its own origin, constitution, and authority, *it is also a supernatural and Divine witness, which can neither fail nor err.* When it œcumenically speaks, it is not merely the voice of the Father of the World; it declares '*what it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.*'"

No wonder that "Lothair," sitting down in the crisis of his life by the moonlit Coliseum, muses in a rhapsody of the magnetism for opposed causes of the genius of the spot, strangely anticipating Zola's contrast between the new Italian "Orlando" and the old Italian "Boccanera."

"Theodora lived for Rome and died for Rome. And the Cardinal, born and bred an English gentleman, with many hopes and honours, had renounced his religion and, it might be said, his country, for Rome; and his race for three hundred years had given, for the same cause, honour, and broad estates, and unhesitating lives. And these very people were influenced by different motives, and thought they were devoting themselves to opposite ends. But still it was Rome; Republican or Cæsarian, papal or pagan, it still was Rome."

I have shown the sources, as I believe, of Disraeli's convictions. He was the first to dwell on those problems of race which are now recognised. His derided "Asian mystery" has been amply justified. His view of the "Caucasian" is that of subsequent science. Writing nearly forty years after he had mooted his ideas, he observed: "familiar as we all are now with such themes . . . the difficulty and hazard of touching for the first time on such topics cannot now be easily appreciated." His beliefs were *racial*, and depended on the clue of race to history. Their applications, however, were *national*. For he knew that race is only an element among the shared associations and common language, customs and history, that make up that ideal assembly which

is called a nation ; and he also knew that mere communication is not communion ; that the rapidity of increased methods of material intercourse will never extinguish the slow, but certain, fires of race discord, which can only "consume its own smoke" through the free fusion of nationality.

His own race he cleared from prejudice, and proudly displayed as a potent, if sometimes hidden, force throughout the world. His praise and illustration of its endowments, its strength by virtue of its purity of strain, its tenacity and power of organisation, its veiled ramifications among the mainsprings that move Governments and alter systems, no longer raise a smile ; and if they did, they would certainly cease to do so when placed on the lips of Macaulay, who thus treated them—

"He knows," said Macaulay, speaking in 1833 of the member for the University of Oxford—"he knows that in the infancy of civilisation, when our island was as savage as New Guinea, when letters and arts were still unknown to Athens, when scarcely a thatched hut stood on what was afterwards the site of Rome, this contemned people had their fenced cities and cedar palaces, their splendid Temple, their fleets of merchant ships, their schools of sacred learning, their great statesmen and soldiers, their natural philosophers, their historians and their poets. . . . Let us open to them every career in which ability and energy can be displayed. Till we have done this, let us not presume to say that there is no genius among the countrymen of Isaiah, or heroism among the descendants of the Maccabees."

CHAPTER V

MONARCHY

“**T**O change back the oligarchy into a generous aristocracy round a *real throne*,” Disraeli ranks, with his ideal mission towards the Church, as “the trainer of the nation ;” towards Labour, to “the moral and physical condition of the people ;” towards Ireland, by governing it “according to the policy of Charles I., and not of Oliver Cromwell ;” to Reform, by emancipating “the political constituency of 1832 from its sectarian bondage and contracted sympathies.”

“Sovereignty,” he says, in the peroration to *Sybil*, “has been the title of something that has had no dominion, while absolute power has been wielded by those who profess themselves the servants of the people. In the selfish strife of factions, two great existences have been blotted out of the history of England—the *Monarch and the Multitude* ; as the power of the Crown has diminished, the privileges of the people have disappeared. . . .” Such was Disraeli’s summary in 1870 of what inspired “Young England” in 1840. The more real is representation, the greater the chances of royalty. De Tocqueville, too, has shown that it was just the decay of mediæval, municipal institutions that loosened the hold of the French Crown on the French nation.

The “real throne,” as against the ornamental, formed a very material part of it. It chimed with Disraeli’s outlook on English institutions as “popular, but not democratic.” Since *Sybil* was written, the “subject” is no longer “a serf,” but for a long time the “sceptre” tended to remain “a pageant.” The constitutional possibilities and opportunities of kingship

under our limited monarchy are even now, perhaps, hardly realised. Before I close this chapter, I intend to say something of their historical lineage.

There is a satirical passage about George the Fourth among the brilliant flippancies of *Vivian Grey*, which may amuse us before coming to close quarters with the serious side of sovereignty: "The first great duty of a monarch is to know how to bow skilfully. Nothing is more difficult, . . . a royal bow may often quell a rebellion, and sometimes crush a conspiracy. Our own Sovereign bows to perfection. His bow is eloquent, and will always render an oration . . . unnecessary, which is a great point, for harangues are not regal. Nothing is more undignified than to make a speech. It is from the first an acknowledgment that you are under the necessity of explaining, or conciliating, or convincing, or confuting; in short, that you are not omnipotent, but opposed."

"The Monarchy of the Tories is more democratic than the Republic of the Whigs!" exclaimed Disraeli, as I have already quoted, in his early *Spirit of Whiggism*. "I think," cried Canning in 1812, "that we have the happiness to live under a limited monarchy, not under a crowned republic;" while, six years later, Canning again denounced most forcibly the error of those "who argue as if the constitution of this country was a broad and level democracy inlaid (for ornament's sake) with a peerage and topped (by sufferance) with a crown." This belief inspired the same statesman when, towards the agitated close of his days, he speaks in a letter to Mr. Croker of his reliance on the "vigour of the Crown" in conjunction with the "body of the people."

This, too, was the belief that inspired Disraeli. "*The monarch and the multitude*." Monarchy should be neither a gewgaw nor an abstraction, but a centre of national enthusiasm. "It is enthusiasm alone that gives flesh and blood to the skeletons of opinions." From the beginning of the first to the close of the fifth decade of last century kingship had been on its trial in England. "The Tories," wrote Disraeli in *The Press*, "already recognised the necessity of employing all the popular elements of the Constitution in support of its monarchical foundation."

Just as I have shown with regard to the Church, his predisposition lay towards pure Theocracy, but his practical bent discerned in a national Church its aptest and most congenial embodiment ; so with regard to kingship his predisposition lay towards pure monarchy—royal leadership—which he knew, and indeed hoped, could in England never prove absolute, still less arbitrary. But a British king retains the great advantage of being outside the prejudices of every order in the State of which he is the social chieftain. The tendency, mused “Sidonia,” of “advanced civilisation was to ‘pure monarchy ;’” “Monarchy is indeed a government which requires a high degree of civilisation for its fulfilment.” Public opinion, absorbing so many functions of control, training, and discussion, should find in the king a disinterested exponent. “In an enlightened age, the monarch on the throne, free from the vulgar prejudices and the corrupt interests of the subject, again becomes divine.” But this was said with regard to France, and in answer to “Coningsby’s” hazard that the republic of that country might absorb its kingdom, and Paris¹ the provinces. It was a dream. None felt more deeply than Disraeli that English tradition was the temper of England. None, more than he, deprecated centralisation. The very value of her “glorious institutions” is, as he often insists, that they foster, in a form above the passions of momentary outburst or fickle reactions, those great elements of loyalty, religion, industry, liberty, and order which have conjoined to make and keep her great. Representing classes, they humanise virtues. The problem since the Revolution has always been how to bring the varying force of public opinion, the power of Parliament, and the cabinet system, which has gradually crystallised, into line with the ancient and beneficial personality of the Crown ; in later times, how to reconcile the King both to Downing and also to Fleet Street ; how to harmonise the dependence of his just limits with the independence of his just influence ; how to render him no mere *roi fainéant*, or marionette to be danced on the wires of patricians or tribunes, but a real representative individuality ; how he may rule as well as reign ; and all this, in this country

¹ Elsewhere Disraeli said that Paris always remains a republic.

and in this century, without assuming any kind of either fatherly or of stepfatherly meddlesomeness ; for the "Patriot King" must never take even a tinge of the Patriarch. He must be one, whatever else he may be, who "thinks more of the community and less of the government." He must, in a word, bear himself as a chief, and not as a master.

As Byron sang, bearing Bolingbroke in mind—

"A despot thou, and yet thy people free,
And by the *heart*, not hand, enslaving us."

The monarch, thought Disraeli, embodies the national elements in a form of abiding and unarbitrary influence ; he is above interest and beyond party ; his position prevents, his functions collide with, any favouritism of any class. A King at one with public opinion can prove a real check on individual designs, ministerial mistakes, private cajoleries, public passions. "The proper leader of the people is the individual who sits upon the throne."

"'And yet,' said Coningsby, 'the only way to terminate what is called class legislation is not to entrust power to classes. . . . *The only power that has no class sympathy is the Sovereign.*'"

"'But suppose the case of an arbitrary Sovereign, what would be your check against him ?'

"'The same as against an arbitrary Parliament.'

"'But a Parliament is responsible . . . to its constituent body.'

"'Suppose it was to vote itself perpetual ?'

"'But public opinion would prevent that.'

"'And is public opinion of less influence on an individual than on a body ?'

"'But public opinion may be indifferent. A nation may be misled—may be corrupt.'

"'If the nation that elects the Parliament be corrupt, the elected body will resemble it. . . . But this only shows that there is something to be considered beyond forms of government—national character. . . .'

"'But do you then declare against Parliamentary government ?'

“‘Far from it. *I look upon political change as the greatest of evils, for it comprehends all.* But if we have no faith in the permanence of the existing settlement—if the very individuals who established it are year after year proposing their modifications or their reconstructions—so, also, while we uphold what exists, ought we to prepare ourselves for the change we deem impending. Now, I would not that either ourselves or our fellow-citizens should be taken unawares as in 1832, when the very men who opposed the Reform Bill offered contrary objections to it which destroyed each other, so ignorant were they of its real character, historical causes, its political consequences. . . . For this purpose I would accustom the public mind to the contemplation of an existing though torpid power in the constitution, capable of removing our social grievances. . . . *The House of Commons is the house of a few ; the Sovereign is the sovereign of all.*’”

Now, undoubtedly the period to which these words refer was one when certain Whig leaders contemplated an oligarchical republic, and wished to compass their aim by an undue exaltation of the Lower House, as, in 1718, Sunderland had wished to attain the same end by that of the Upper. No student of the Croker Papers can fail to recognise the fact, and undoubtedly Disraeli thought—and Sir Robert Peel thought so too—that the times were ripe for reviving those constitutional prerogatives, those kingly privileges which form the Crown’s sole direct representative faculty in the constitution, of which the Crown had long been robbed, first by its own alternate abuse or incapacity to use them, afterwards by faction itself often imitating the royal errors. And so the executive power had passed almost wholly into ministerial hands. After 1830 the prerogatives which, as I shall show, Mr. Gladstone champions, seemed falling into entire abeyance. In 1836, before he had entered Parliament, Disraeli had, in the *Runnymede Letters*, where he spoke of “the people of England sighing once more to be a nation,” called on Sir Robert Peel to achieve “a great task in a great spirit”—“*rescue your Sovereign from an unconstitutional thralldom ; rescue an august Senate which has already fought the battle of the people ; rescue our National Church which our*

opponents hate, our venerable constitution at which they scoff; but, above all, rescue that mighty body of which all these great classes and institutions are but one of the constituent and essential parts—rescue the *nation*.”

In 1837, “our young Queen and our old Institutions” were no mere catchwords. And it seems unquestionable, also, that the subsequent interferences of Baron Stockmar, the late Queen's early tutelage to Lord Melbourne, the circumstances attendant on her happy marriage, the peculiar treatment of Prince Consort by her first ministers, and the long retirement due to private grief, contributed in successive combination towards that invisibility, so to speak, of her royal office, which prevailed, though it did not, however, eventually preclude her very real and valuable exercise of it. In England the only true blemish of our party system, which Disraeli vehemently fought to uphold, is, as he more than once urged, that it tends to “warp the intelligence.” To this fault the wisdom of a constitutional and popular monarch, above and beyond party, offers an antidote.

Sir Robert Peel, in the very year of Queen Victoria's accession, writes to Croker as follows :—

“ . . . The theory of the constitution is that the King has no will except in the choice of his ministers. . . . *But this, like a thousand other theories, is at variance with the fact.* The personal character of the sovereign . . . has an immense practical effect. . . . There may not be violent collisions between the King and his Government, but his influence, though dormant and unseen, may be very powerful. Respect for personal character will operate in some cases; in others the King will have all the authority which greater and more widely extended experience than that of any single minister will naturally give. A King, after a reign of ten years, ought to know much more of the working of the machine of government than any other man in the country. *He is the centre to which all business gravitates.* The knowledge that the King holds firmly a certain opinion, and will abide by it, prevents in many cases an opposite opinion being offered to him. . . . The personal character of a really constitutional King, of mature age, of experience in public affairs, and knowledge,

manners, and customs, is practically so much *ballast*, keeping the vessel of the State steady in her course, countervailing the levity of popular ministers, of orators forced by oratory into public councils, the blasts of democratic passions, the groundswell of discontent, and 'the ignorant impatience for the relaxation of taxation.' . . . The genius of the Constitution had contrived this in times gone by.

" 'Speluncis abdidit atris
Hoc metuens, molemque et montes insuper altos
Imposuit, *Regemque* dedit, qui *fœdere certo*
Et premere, et laxas sciret dare jussus habenas.' "

" If at other times this *paternal authority*¹ were requisite, the authority to be exercised *fœdere certo*, by the nice tact of an experienced hand, how much more is it necessary when every institution is reeling, when

' *Excutimur cursu, et cæcis erramus in undis* ! ' "

Sir Robert's idea, then, of a constitutional sovereign was that of an unseen driver who holds the reins from within. The sailor-king of narrow mind but broad sympathies, just departed when Peel wrote, had not proved a cipher. He insisted on being for a space Lord High Admiral, despite Croker's ungenerous retort that James II. had done the same. In 1828 he had offered wise advice to his ministers as to the unripeness of the times for a change in the form then proposed, which touched his heart. On his accession he emphatically expressed his pleasure in retaining his ministers. And, though he composed a couplet so bad that it might have been the jingle of Harley—

" *A dissolution
Means revolution,* "

yet throughout the brief and perplexed span of his reign he honestly tried to accord with the whole nation as opposed to cliques and sections of it that assumed the title of "the people." The fact was that he acceded during one of those crises when the balance of power was shifting, and, his intellect

¹ It will be noticed that Sir Robert goes beyond Disraeli's ideas of direct kingship.

being mediocre, he became bewildered. The new, the legitimate, the organised predominance of public opinion clashed with Parliament, and was played upon by ambitious ministers. William the Fourth lived in just fear and blunt defiance of that "Venetian oligarchy" which ever since 1704 had been the recurrent ideal of the place-engrossing, great revolution families. What he apprehended was foiled, principally by the personality of Sir Robert Peel, whom he summoned to his aid. Henceforward the monarchy became, as it ought long before to have become, completely, if gradually, popularised. When monarchy is popular, the invisibility of its office ceases to be an expedient. ". . . I think," said Disraeli, in a speech of 1850, "it one of the great misfortunes of our time, and one most injurious to public liberty, that the power of the Crown has diminished."

With Victoria and our present King—if we except a very transient spasm of George III., whose first essay to be a "patriot king" had been to dismiss and thwart the most popular minister that England has ever had—monarchy has for the first time during nearly two centuries proved wholly and nationally popular. Before the Stuarts, Elizabeth had ruled by the sole virtue of her popularity; she had "inflamed the national spirit," and the checks introduced by the Revolution were only a necessity for unpopular sovereigns. The Press has now introduced a far greater check than any of these. Now that the nation is in full unison with the Crown, the King is doubly entitled to support the nation in hours of befitting emergency against the cabals or passions of a person, a clique, or a class. A modern English King is too cognisant of the popular feeling eloquent in an unbridled press ever to violate it; he could not do so with impunity. The last surrender of "independent kingship," which Mr. Gladstone has noted, and others after him, was in 1827, when a weak sovereign renewed the "charter of administration of the day." There is no pretext now for a King to yield or hide his just and popular privileges to serve the turn of ministers. The necessity for a "monarch of Downing Street" has disappeared.

Disraeli adverted to some of these topics at Manchester in 1872, long after the events of those times had passed,

but when "the banner of republicanism" was once again unfurled.

". . . Since the settlement of that constitution, now nearly two centuries ago, England has never experienced a revolution, though there is no country in which there has been so continuous and such considerable change. How is this? Because the wisdom of your forefathers placed the prize of supreme power without the sphere of human passions. Whatever the struggle of parties, whatever the strife of factions, whatever the excitement and exaltation of the public mind, there has always been something in this country round which all classes and powers could rally, representing the majesty of the law, the administration of justice, and involving at the same time the security for every man's rights and the fountain of honour." And then, after emphasising the non-partisanship of the Crown, the very end which Bolingbroke forecasted at the time when an unemancipated King was condemned to be a party man, he led the discussion to the conventional views of the King being not only outside politics, but outside affairs.

". . . I know it will be said that, however beautiful in theory, the personal influence of the Sovereign is now absorbed in the responsibility of the minister. I think you will find there is a great fallacy in this view. The principles of the English Constitution do not contemplate the absence of personal influence on the part of the Sovereign; and if they did, the principles of human nature would prevent the fulfilment of such a theory." He is here in complete accord with Peel. "Even," he says, "with average ability, it is impossible not to perceive that such a Sovereign must soon attain a great mass of political information and political experience. Information and experience, . . . whether they are possessed by a Sovereign or by the humblest of his subjects, are irresistible in life. . . . The longer the reign, the influence of that Sovereign must proportionately increase. All the illustrious statesmen who served his youth disappear. A new generation of public servants rises up. There is a critical conjuncture in affairs—a moment of perplexity and peril. Then it is that the Sovereign can appeal to a similar state of affairs that

occurred perhaps thirty years before. When all are in doubt among his servants, he can quote the advice that was given by the illustrious men of his early years, and though he may maintain himself within the strictest limits of the Constitution, who can suppose, when such information and such suggestions are made by the most exalted person in the country, that they can be without effect? No; . . . a minister who could venture to treat such influence with indifference would not be a Constitutional minister, but an arrogant idiot. . . ." And in another speech of the same year, after insisting that English attachment to English institutions was no "political superstition," but sprang from a resolve that "*the principles of liberty, of order, of law, and of religion ought not to be entrusted to individual opinion, or to the caprice and passion of multitudes, but should be embodied in a form of permanence and power,*" he also remarked: ". . . We associate with the Monarchy the ideas which it represents—the majesty of law, the administration of justice, the fountain of mercy and honour." He might, in fitness with his other pronouncements, have added the ideas of loyalty and of leadership. Again, in 1871, a moment of republican revival, adverting to the superintendence of public business by the Sovereign, he insisted that ". . . there is not a dispatch received from abroad, or sent from this country abroad, which is not submitted to the Queen. . . . Those Cabinet Councils, . . . which are necessarily the scene of anxious and important deliberations, are reported and communicated, . . . and they often call from her critical remarks requiring considerable attention. . . . No person likely to administer the affairs of this country would treat the suggestions of Her Majesty with indifference, for at this moment there is probably no person living who has such complete control over the political conditions. . . . But, although there never was a Sovereign who would less arrogate any power or prerogative which the Constitution does not authorise, so I will say there never was one more wisely jealous of those which the Constitution has allotted to her, because she believes they are for the welfare of her people."

It is by its constitutional prerogatives that, in the first

place, the Crown can assert its lawful influence. They confer on him a deciding power in many spheres. Of these prerogatives Disraeli was a champion; and Mr. Gladstone upheld them in at least two interesting discussions among his "Gleanings."

To defer the most obvious among these, the King's consultative faculty, "the power," to cite Mr. Gladstone, "which gives the monarch an undoubted *locus standi* in all the deliberations of a Government, . . . remains as it was." In olden days this was effected openly in form. Nor should it be forgotten that whenever a Ministry is changed, again to cite Mr. Gladstone, "the whole power of the State periodically returns into the royal hands." In 1852, when Lord Derby reluctantly consented to assume office with a minority, there were forty-eight hours when, as Disraeli pointed out in a speech of 1873, "the Queen was without a Government." Then take the royal prerogative of dissolution. This right enabled, in 1852, that very administration to perform the work of the session, and to carry the supplies before appealing to the constituencies on its right to exist. It is in effect a right of appeal by the Sovereign through or even against (should he deem it their duty to take the national voice) his ministers to the country; and in any crucial instance it forms the best check to faction of which our Constitution admits.

Further, there exists the admitted prerogative, openly exercised, of choice of ministers. This was the main arena of party cleavage under the greater portion of the sway of George III. It was this which, as Mr. Gladstone also mentions, was unsuccessfully, but neither unwholesomely nor unfairly, pressed into popular service in 1834. And, among many others remaining, there is that to appoint bishops—a stalking-ground of contention during the reign of Anne, and, in the Victorian era, signalised by Dr. Hampden's appointment against a remonstrant primate. There is the prerogative of the Royal Warrant utilised by Mr. Gladstone himself in the repeal of the Purchase Act. There is the prerogative of disapproving the choice of Speaker, which will probably cease. There is that for proposing grants of public money, and there

is the salutary initiative of Royal Commission which paves the way for social reform. On these personal rights I need not dwell. But on the prerogative of peace and war a word must be said. Had it been withheld for hostilities in the Crimea, a needless complication of Europe need never have occurred.¹ We may conjecture that its influence was not absent from our recent peace in South Africa. Mr. Gladstone has instanced the Chinese war, some fifty years ago, as an example of carrying on a conflict believed to be necessary despite its condemnation by "the stewards of the public purse." The Sovereign has also the undoubted right to consult with his ministers, and to attend the deliberations of his Cabinet. Queen Anne did this habitually, and the fatal movement of her fan decided great issues on more than one occasion. The first two Georges used on occasion, but with indifference where money was not concerned, to do the same. Since then it has fallen into disuse, and perhaps the end is better served by the premier's audiences with his King. But I may here be permitted to hope that when the great intercolonial council which is in the air has taken shape, the Sovereign may deign to be its President. Such a decision would be in complete accord with the policy of Disraeli, who affirmed in 1876, "No one regrets more than I do that favourable opportunities have been lost of identifying the colonies with the royal race of England."

The prerogatives are the royal faculties for independent expression. But it is obviously not by prerogative mainly or alone that the Crown rivets and can mould a nation. The Crown is a many-sided emblem. It is the centre of English unity, a focus of consolidation and compactness; while it also represents Great and Greater Britain abroad. As a source of home sympathy, as the embodiment of the

¹ In 1872, Disraeli said, after stating that Lord Derby's successor was no enemy to Russian aggression, ". . . I speak of what I know, not of what I believe, but of what I have evidence in my possession to prove, *that the Crimean War would never have happened if Lord Derby had remained in office. . .*" Lord Derby's error in resigning in 1853 he always deplored; just as he regretted equally his rash acceptance of office during the previous year, and his more fatal timidity in shrinking from assuming it in 1855.

might and mercy of a great Empire, as the durable impersonation of the individual character that out of many welded races creates a united Empire, it is manifestly operative. I may add that it may also set an example of simplicity, for the Crown is able to bring choice virtues into vulgar fashion.

Nor should sight be lost of the immense services which the Sovereign may render to British interests abroad. Shifting administrations encourage various hopes in foreign powers. The Crimean War was an outcome of such renewed aspirations. Our foreign policy lacks the strength of continuity, and its changefulness seems ineradicable from our party system. It is, therefore, of high importance that European courts should be able to count on certain limits which they know that a monarch whom they respect is likely to maintain. Such a consciousness of finality enables foreign Governments to moderate the popular clamour often worked up by dishonest agitation, and the more obstinate because purposely misinformed. The Crown can thus become a great conciliator,¹ and sometimes a preventer of actual war. The affinities of the blood royal to continental dynasties are not so cogent, though their material aid as sources of inner information is manifest. But as guarantees of amity they often prove comparatively helpless, unless supported by the recognition of character, tact, and abilities, for which the nurture of every British prince should fit him, and which entitle him to appeal to every differing headship of peoples abroad, as well as to the originally alien ingredients of empire at home. The British Sovereign may well be called the Member for the Empire.

On these aspects Disraeli often dwelt; and at a period when, for these objects, the comparatively small expense was affected to be grudged by a set of extreme politicians, his analysis proved its cheapness in proportion to the cost of large democracies and republics.

A great outcry was raised when, twenty-seven years ago, Disraeli made the startling move of appealing alike to the Hindoo and the Mohammedan sentiment by investing Queen Victoria with a title which has impressed India with the

¹ This passage was written before the events of 1903.

grandeur of Great Britain. To the Oriental the style of a white queen meant as little as to the queen of the Ansaries, so humorously depicted in *Tancred*. It was well said of Disraeli by Lord Salisbury, in the speech which commemorated his death, that zeal for the greatness of England had eaten him up ; and zeal, as Disraeli observed in an Irish speech of 1844, is rare enough in these days. Never was a stroke more justified by its results. Like the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, equally justified, it was bitterly and blindly assailed. "Bastard imperialism" was the refrain of the Opposition. No one knew on what sacred ark the Machiavellian finger might next be laid.

Disraeli proved that "empress" was an old ascription even in England, and that "emperor" even in the Western mind was not a title bound up with "bad associations." Macaulay had singled out the age of the Antonines as a signal era for the world, and the Antonines had been emperors. In the early 'sixties a definite and powerful party had conspired to break the unity of the empire and the dignity of the kingdom, to sacrifice everything to material considerations, to convert *a first-class monarchy into a second-class republic*. It was not enough that the national sentiment should be diverted from appeals to pocket by appeals to patriotism ; that the gush of utilitarian cold water should be arrested from drowning the rekindled flames of public spirit. The coloured imagination of the East must also be brought into line with the soberer background of the West. Nor was the relation of the measure less weighty to Europe. Europe, too, must realise that India was a trust which Britain was resolute never to abandon. These objects Disraeli effected by his "Royal Titles Bill," a conception as simple as it was daring. "They know in India," he urged, after imploring the House to "remove prejudice from their minds"—"they know in India what this bill means, and they know that what it means is what they wish. . . . Let not our divisions be misconstrued. *Let the people of India feel that there is a sympathetic chord between us and them, and do not let Europe suppose for a moment that there are any in this House who are not deeply conscious of the importance of our Indian Empire.*

Unfortunate words have been heard in the debate upon this subject ; but I will not believe that any member of this House seriously contemplates the loss of our Indian Empire. . . . If you sanction the passing of this bill, it will be an act, to my mind, that will add splendour even to her throne, and security even to her Empire." In a subsequent chapter I shall show that these ideas of sympathy with India had animated him while the great Mutiny was raging.

It was Disraeli who suggested to Queen Victoria the propriety of learning the language and studying the literature of the vast domain over which she ruled, and the *munshis* summoned to instruct her, brought home to every Indian the conviction that her sway was one, not only of strength, but of sympathy and intelligence. Doubtless these policies were born of dreams, and of dreams which to the unreflecting might seem extravaganzas. But they were not merely an Arabian Nights' entertainment. The Monarchy, like the Church, in his mind were in one respect akin. The Clergy and the King were both "English citizens and English gentlemen," and yet the undue political influence of either, as he insisted in 1861, was to be feared, because it might diminish their best influence. Both make for order, and order makes for liberty. ". . . It is said sometimes that the Church of England is hostile to religious liberty. As well might it be said that the Monarchy of England is adverse to political freedom."

Many of Disraeli's central ideas as to British kingship were partly decided by him from his boyish conversance with the works of Lord Bolingbroke, whose constitutional theories (repeated by Burke) solved the difficulty of accounting for the popularity of exclusiveness in the theory of government, and for the odiousness of that party which had once been inclusive and "national." Prerogative has been nowhere better defined than by Bolingbroke, who uniformly also declares that Parliament is the main barrier against "the usurpation of its illegal, or the abuse of its legal, powers." He terms prerogative "a discretionary power in the King to act for the good of his people where the laws are silent ; . . . never contrary to law ;" and this in a passage where he protests against its

being raised "one step higher ;" and he has further shown elsewhere how some such "barefaced, extraordinary powers" were welcomed by the nation in Elizabeth's reign, because they were called forth by popular emergencies and used in a popular manner. Elizabeth, at a time before the Sovereign depended on Parliament, and before the Cabinet system was established, owed her power to her sympathy with her people. The first two Georges were unsympathetic, and the second abetted not only partisanship, but cliqueship. He became dependent on contending heads of greedy factions. To cure these evils was the purport of the "Patriot King," which inspired Disraeli as it had before inspired Chatham.

It has been objected that Bolingbroke's aim was for the King to "defy Parliament." Nothing could be further from the truth. Throughout his writings he champions the rights of Parliament ; indeed, Parliament was his hobby. In his treatise on the "Patriot King," the word "Parliament" is not employed—it is his only essay from which it is absent—but the phrase "the people," that is, has been expressly defined by him as the whole nation in its capacities, representative as well as collective. It therefore includes "Parliament." In Bolingbroke's previous "Spirit of Patriotism," he had approached the theme of national regeneration from the standpoint of the ideal citizen ; in the "Patriot King," from the standpoint of a throne in accord with national concurrence. Its whole pith is that the ideal King, governing through ministers and through party, should rise above and beyond them. He must be neither a partisan (as all the Georges proved), nor a puppet, nor (as Canning long afterwards repeated) "the tool of a confederacy," but in alliance with and reliance on the whole body of his subjects. The "Patriot King" is expressly urged "to confine instead of labouring to extend his prerogative ;" and Bolingbroke adds that such an ideal would be derided by his own generation.

Of Elizabeth herself, whose great example is his perpetual praise, he has observed elsewhere that, "instead of struggling through trouble and danger to bend the constitution to any particular views of her own, she accommodated her notions,

her views, and her whole character to it ; ” and he proceeds to say, “ a free people expects this of their prince. He is made for their sakes, not they for his ; ” and again, “ the merit of a wise governor is wisely to superintend the whole.” He expresses his ideal of an impartial and democratic King in his “ Spirit of Patriotism ” as of one who should “ *govern all by all.* ” He further, in many direct passages, distinctly looks forward to a transference of power from caballing cliques led by selfish ambition, to the nation at large, and he calls on the King to be a truly national ruler. He desires, under changes, descried in the dim distance, that the “ *sense of the Court, the sense of the Parliament, and the sense of the People should be the same ;* ” that the King, as he expresses it, should prove the “ centre of the nation,” and, as Disraeli has expressed it, should be above “ class interests ; ” should, in a country of classes, respond to every class, and favouritise none. To this end he harped, as did Disraeli from first to last, on what he admits to be a seeming solecism—a “ National Party ; ” and by this he means—as I could prove by countless passages—a party whose main object is *national and imperial unity* ; one that is, moreover, comprehensive instead of being exclusive.

These ideas, in happier times and altered circumstances, passed to Disraeli. In 1859, repeating in part what he had affirmed of “ Bolingbroke ” in the Letter to Lord Lyndhurst, indited nearly twenty-five years earlier, he said of the Conservative party : “ . . . In attempting, however humbly, to regulate its fortunes, I have always striven to distinguish that which was eternal from that which was but accidental in its opinions. I have always striven to assist in building it upon a *broad and national* basis, because I believed it to be a party peculiarly and essentially *national*—a party which adhered to the institutions of the country as embodying the national necessities and forming the best security for the liberty, the power, and the prosperity of England.”

In his Runnymede Letter to Peel of 1836, he calls on him to head this “ national party.” In his Crystal Palace oration of 1872, he showed that the ideal of a “ Conservative ” party seeking to preserve, adapt, and expand traditional institutions

is to be national. In this striking speech, after deprecating that, in the days of Eldon, "... instead of the principles professed by Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, and which those great men inherited 'from predecessors' not less illustrious, the Tory system had degenerated into a policy which formed an adequate basis on the principles of exclusiveness and restriction," he urged, as he had always urged: "... The Tory party, unless it is a national party, is nothing. It is not a confederacy of nobles, it is not a democratic multitude; it is a party formed from all the numerous classes in the realm—classes alike and equal before the law, but whose different conditions and different aims give vigour and variety to our national life."

For the essence of these ideas, the forms which have since appeared or vanished—the development of the ministerial system, the organisation of public opinion—are immaterial. Of course Bolingbroke could not foresee the *routine* of the far future; it was its *spirit* which he foresaw, and to which, through Disraeli, he contributed. In his own language about another, he "... *had the wisdom to discern, not only the actual alteration which was already made, but the growing alteration which would every day increase.*" And this, too, may be affirmed of Disraeli.

I think that, in the denial of Bolingbroke's real objects, achieved by Disraeli, some misconception has arisen from the constant use towards the close of the eighteenth century of "to govern by party connections."

George III., a student of Bolingbroke, but a narrow abuser on his first trial of his doctrine, was accused of meaning to dispense with this watchword of oligarchs. But the quarrels of his time proved that what George III. really wanted was to dispense with one party alone, to escape from the dictation of a few governing families, and to choose his own ministers. There may be—there have been—great parties based on principles of disruption and contraction rather than of union and expansion, or parties based on principles more international or continental than national and British. A "national" party does not exclude their existence and criticism, any more than it does that of another "national" party taking another outlook

on "general principles." What it ought more and more to exclude, what the monarch as the centre of union should more and more render impossible, is an anti-national group, and the remedy that Burke suggests for such an ailment is that propounded by Bolingbroke and upheld by Disraeli—the limited and constitutional prerogatives of the Crown—which should render less possible those gangs of office-mongers who, in Bolingbroke's phrase, pay "a private court at the public expense," and in Disraeli's, are "public traders of easy virtue."

These ideas, shared by Bolingbroke, by Burke, by Canning, and by Disraeli, are no tiresome theories, but lively and practical issues. We too must look ahead. How far under modern conditions, and apart from the spasms and clamours of party, can the sovereign power as a force consolidating the Empire be strengthened, and the royal prerogatives wisely displayed in the light of day? Ought a King's personality to prove also the means of his power? Time will show.

CHAPTER VI

COLONIES—EMPIRE—FOREIGN POLICY

BEFORE Disraeli had entered public life, at a time when public opinion remained stagnant regarding the reciprocal needs and splendid future of the Mother Country and her children, while it was still thought optional whether the parent supported the offspring or the offspring the parent, Disraeli had pondered on the problem, and brought imagination to bear upon it. The colonies were not merely commercial acquisitions, they were the free vents for the surplus energy of a great race, and the nursery gardens of national institutions.

In *Contarini Fleming* he thus muses, dreaming of things to come, in sight of Corcyra—

“ . . . There is a great difference between ancient and modern colonies. A modern colony is a commercial enterprise, an ancient colony was a political sentiment. In the emigration of our citizens, hitherto, *we have merely sought the means of acquiring wealth*; the ancients, when their brethren quitted their native shores, wept and sacrificed, and were reconciled to the loss of their fellow-citizens solely by the constraint of stern necessity, and the hope that they were about to find easier subsistence, and to lead a more cheerful and commodious life. *I believe that a great revolution is at hand in our system of colonisation, and that Europe will soon recur to the principles of the ancient polity.*” In 1836 he thus satirises the impending King’s speech in his *Runnymede Letter to Lord Melbourne*—

“ . . . It will announce to us that in our colonial empire the most important results may speedily be anticipated from the discreet selection of Lord Auckland as a successor to our

Clives and our Hastings ; that the progressive improvement of the French in the manufacture of beetroot may compensate for the approaching destruction of our West Indian plantations ;¹ and that, although Canada is not yet independent, the final triumph of liberal principles, under the immediate patronage of the Government, may eventually console us for the loss of the glory of Chatham and the conquests of Wolfe."

Once in the House of Commons, he never ceased to urge the claims of sentiment and the bonds of interest, while he enforced the necessity for cementing them by federation and by tariffs. In 1848, when Lord Palmerston, with his "perfumed cane," was dictating a constitution to Narvaez, Disraeli, who on principle deprecated interference with foreign powers unless British interests were endangered, here supported him, just because he considered it a case with contingencies affecting our colonial welfare and our own prestige. It was in 1848, too, that, descanting on the narrowing aspects of the Manchester School, and their "unblushing" advocacy of the "interests of capital," he indicted their "colonial reform with ruining the colonies." It was in the same year that he taxed the self-righteous Peelites with "turning up their noses at East India cotton as at everything else Colonial and Imperial."²

Under Governments, of which Disraeli was the leading spirit, a constitution was framed for New Zealand in 1852, and in the summer of 1858 the colony of British Columbia was established. It was not more than a few months afterwards that disturbances arose ; and the *Times*, in its review of the year 1859, found in these elements only the "incubus" of ubiquitous colonies and commerce. To this standing snarl about "the millstone of the colonies and India" Disraeli adverted thirteen years afterwards, when he said : ". . . It has been shown with precise, with mathematical demonstration,

¹ This was realised some ten years later by the repeal of the Sugar Duties.

² The speech about Income Tax, which contains another masterly analysis of the displacement of labour. Previously, in 1845, he had said of Canada, ". . . I am not one of those who think that its inevitable lot is to become annexed to the United States. Canada has all the elements of a great and independent country, and is destined, I sometimes believe, to be the Russia of the New World."

that there never was a jewel in the Crown of England that was so truly costly. . . . How often has it been suggested that we should emancipate ourselves from this incubus!" It was Disraeli's Government that in the 'sixties was to confederate Canada, and in the 'seventies to devise a scheme for confederating South Africa. In his earliest pamphlets Disraeli had announced that the genius of the age was one of a transition from the "feodal" to the "federal." In his whole outlook throughout he sought to reconcile the higher spirit of the one with the material interests of the other. And yet, astounding to relate, it was stated in a speech some seven years or so ago, that Disraeli himself had endorsed such melancholy and shortsighted pettiness. The sole foundation that I have been able to find is a stray sentence in a light letter to Lord Malmesbury; just as in 1863 he made merry in Parliament over those who regarded the "colonial empire" as an "annual burden."

This sentence, jesting of the "millstone," but sighing over the chance of severance, was penned in 1853—the very year after the New Zealand Constitution. It was a time of despondency, following on fourteen years of colonial crisis. During it both Canada and the Cape had rebelled. The former's Constitution had been suspended. The repeal of the Sugar Duties had estranged mutinous Jamaica. Peel had been constrained to exclaim that in "Every one of our colonies we have another Ireland," and Peel was an imperialist. In a raw state, and in the crudity of earlier hardships, the colonies always clash more readily with home government than when the mellowing progress of experience enables them to take a less partial view, and to accept help in working out their own salvation. Moreover, the choice still lay between pure democracy and democracy monarchical and national. The democratic idea during this period was working in absolute detachment from the ancient institutions which should have been easily transplanted. In the colonies these were all in danger. It was difficult here to find a rallying centre for them there, and that difficulty was heightened by the two new schools of Radical thought—the older, that of the philosophical Molesworth and the utilitarian Hume, who tested

policy by the criterion of immediate success ; the newer, that of the dry "Physical Equalitarians" of Manchester, which regarded Great Britain as a huge co-operative store. Disraeli from first to last urged the especial need in England for strong as well as good government. The faculties for government were being lessened and weakened. It was not one side only that despaired ; Lord John Russell himself had no faith in the bare democracy of the colonial feeling. And yet we have seen what Disraeli wrote of Lord John in *The Press* at this very period. The home example then was unpropitious for the colonies. Monarchy was yet far from popular. What Disraeli feared in England—what may still be dreaded in our midst—was the possible reaction—in the face of limited employment of labour and growing tyranny of capital—from detached democracy to moneyed despotism. "Nor is there"—wrote Disraeli, with premature penetration, in *The Press* of March 21, 1853—"a country in the world in which the reaction from democracy to despotism would be so sudden and so complete as in England, because in no other country is there the same timidity of capital ; and just in proportion as democratic progress by levelling the influences of birth elevates the influences of money, does it create a power that would at any time annihilate liberty—if liberty were brought into opposition with the three-per-cents." The effects of this fermenting leaven both in England and among her colonies had to be weighed ; and Disraeli many years afterwards avowed in a speech that for a moment he too had wavered. That moment was the one of this passing phrase. But it stood for a phase as momentary. Disraeli, like Strepsiades in the Attic burlesque, had only "mislaidd his cloak, not lost it."¹ Ten years later he could advocate our colonial empire with effect and authority. The colonies had become—as the Crown had become—a popular institution, and a requisite for the fresh air, fresh vents, and fresh health of an expanding population cramped by now overcrowded towns. They might still prove a recruiting ground for labour. Peel's adoption of the "physical happiness" principle, which postulates unlimited

¹ "Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἀπολόλεκ' ἀλλὰ καταπεφρόντικα."

employment of industry, had not settled that problem by his "liberation of commerce." And, as Disraeli pointed out in 1873, if it were only to be settled by natural forces, the "unlimited employment" of labour made for the erasement of the national idea. To the theoretic Radical, however, the colonies, like all our institutions, were still obstacles. ". . . To him the colonial empire is only an annual burden. To him corporation is an equivalent term for monopoly, and endowment for privilege. . . ."

Together with Disraeli's name, in the mention of early colonial aspirations, that of the then Sir E. Bulwer Lytton should assuredly be commemorated. He, too, treated colonial concerns, during his brief period of secretaryship, with firmness, insight, and adroitness. Nor should it be forgotten that between the two was a link of romantic imagination as well as of long-standing friendship. Years before, they had both contributed to the *New Monthly Magazine*. Both were men of striking originality, untempered by a public school education; and it is amusing to note that the fantastic strain, enabling both to view the prospect spaciouly, and censured as "un-English"¹ in Disraeli—often when he was really quoting from our classics²—was only criticised as "extravagant" in Lytton, or, at a later period, as "ornate" in Lord Leighton. Both were students and interpreters of Bolingbroke. They had each the faculty of regarding history as a whole, and from a high vantage-ground, instead of perverting their vision of progress by the paltry rancours of the moment. Such an instinct is invaluable in attaching new settlements to the nest of their nurture.

¹ It will be remembered that in *Coningsby* "Rigby's" election speech called everything with which he disagreed "un-English." Dickens's satire of the misuse of "un-English" in the person of "Podsnap" may be compared.

² "Light and leading," which Disraeli employed long before the famous letter to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, in a speech of 1858, comes of course from Burke. His theory of the House of Lords in 1861 as "an intermediate body" is derived from Bolingbroke and Burke. "Peace with honour" he employed in one of his Crimean speeches. Many of his phrases were derived from the works of his father.

In 1863, summarising the aspirations of Conservatism, he spoke of "our colonial empire, *which is the national estate*, that assures to every subject, . . . as it were, a freehold, and which gives to the energies and abilities of Englishmen an inexhaustible theatre." He was swift to discern the bearing of crucial alterations in America on the colonies. In 1864, while the civil conflict was raging in the United States, he urged, regarding them: ". . . What is the position of the colonies and dependencies of her Majesty in that country? Four years ago, when the struggle broke out, there was very little in common between them. *The tie that bound them to this country was almost one of formality*; but what has been the consequence of this great change in North America? You have now a powerful federation *with the element of nationality strongly evinced in it*. They count their population by millions, and they are conscious that they have a district more fertile and an extent of territory equal to the unappropriated reserves of the United States. *These are the elements and prognostics of new influences* that have changed the character of that country. Nor is it without reason that they do not feel less of the ambition which characterises new communities than the United States, and that they may become, we will say, the '*Russia of the New World*.' . . . If from considerations of expense we were to quit the possessions that we now occupy in North America, it would be ultimately, as regards our resources and wealth, as fatal a step as could possibly be taken. Our prosperity would not long remain a consolation, *and we might then prepare for the invasion of our country and the subjection of the people*." And he next insisted on the need of Canada's adequate defence, saying that while we would not force our connection on any dependency, yet, finding our colonies now asserting the principle of their nationality, ". . . and . . . foreseeing a glorious future, . . . still depending on the faithful and affectionate assistance of England, it would be the most short-sighted and suicidal policy to shrink from the duty that Providence has called upon us to fulfil." In 1866, again, he advocated colonial interests in Parliament, and, by a fine phrase, warned us to ". . . recollect that England is the *metropolis of a colonial empire*; that she is at the

head of a vast number of colonies, the majority of which are yearly increasing in wealth ; and that every year these colonies send back to these shores their capital and their intelligence in the persons of distinguished men, who are naturally anxious that *these interests should be represented in the House of Commons.*"

But it was in 1872 that Disraeli first propounded a colonial policy which was the sum of many previous pronouncements, and is even now being pondered, and not by one party alone. He recognised that a united empire implies a united nation ; that, as he always maintained, Parliament represents national opinion, and that colonial opinion and sentiment at last formed part of it.

"Gentlemen," urged Disraeli, "there is another and second great object of the Tory party. If the first is to maintain the institutions of the country, the second is, in my opinion, to uphold the empire of England. If you look to the history of this country since the advent of Liberalism—forty years ago—you will find that there has been no effort, so continuous, so subtle, supported by so much energy, and carried on with so much ability and acumen, as the attempts of Liberalism *to effect the disintegration of the empire of England.* Statesmen of the highest character, writers of the most distinguished ability, the most organised and efficient means have been employed in this endeavour. It has been proved to all of us that we have lost money by our colonies." Alluding next to the "incubus" in the passage I have already cited, he thus frankly continues : . . . "Well, that result was nearly accomplished when these subtle views were adopted by the country, under the plausible plea of granting self-government to the colonies. I confess that I myself thought that the tie was broken. Not that I, for one, object to self-government. I cannot conceive how our distant colonies can have their affairs administered except by self-government. But self-government, in my opinion, ought to have been conceded, *as part of a great policy of imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied by an imperial tariff, by securities for the people of England for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands which belonged to the sovereign as their trustee, and by a military code which should have precisely defined the means and*

the responsibilities by which the colonies should be defended,¹ and by which, if necessary, the country should call for aid from the colonies themselves. It ought further to have been accompanied by the institution of some representative council in the metropolis, which would have brought the colonies into constant and continuous relations with the home Government. All this, however, was omitted because those who advised that policy—and I believe their convictions were sincere—looked upon the colonies of England, looked even upon our connection with India, as a burden upon this country, viewing everything in a financial aspect, and totally passing by those moral and political considerations which make nations great, and by the influence of which alone men are distinguished from animals.”

Here we have a foreseeing and a far-seeing policy. Not a point of this forecast but has engaged, or will soon engage, national attention. With what courage and sagacity did Disraeli hand on the torch of Bolingbroke, who, first of English statesmen, had emphasised the significance of Gibraltar, who foretold England's mission as “a Mediterranean power,”² and pictured her then scanty colonies as so many “home farms”! None can now doubt the sagacity; and if any doubt the courage, they have only to peruse the warnings of that commercial Cassandra, Mr. Bright, who, during the manufactured reaction of 1879, unconsciously justified Disraeli's predictions of seven years before. After cataloguing his “annexations” like an auctioneer, he thus proceeded to stir passion and impute motives—

“ . . . All this adds to your burdens. Just listen to this: they add to the burdens, not of the empire, but of the 33,000,000 of people who inhabit Great Britain and Ireland. We take the burden and pay the charge. This policy may lend a seeming glory to the Crown, and it may give scope for patronage and promotion, and pay a pension to a limited and favoured class. But to you, the people, it brings expenditure of blood and treasure, increased debts and taxes, and adds risk of war in every part of the globe.”

¹ He had in an earlier speech considered this question with regard to Canada.

² This very phrase was repeated by Lord Beaconsfield in 1876.

Is sense more conspicuous than charity in this onslaught? Has it not been proved penny wise, pound foolish? Could a better instance be adduced of a contrast between England as an emporium and Great Britain as a united empire?¹ In many respects I honour Mr. Bright. He at least had the courage of his honest convictions. He was against war altogether; but in being so he opposed the instincts of rising nationalities and tried to lull Great Britain into a fool's paradise of international exhibitions. It is now asserted that Russia could not advance through Persia to India without a bristling series of bayonets. This is not to be wished, but is it to be feared? Of "Peace at any price," Disraeli said with truth—and truth in the interests of general peace—that it was a "dangerous doctrine, which had done more mischief and caused more wars than the most ruthless conquerors." What happened? Mr. Bright at a bound converted Mr. Gladstone. It was a mutual necessity. Neither of them without the other could have swayed the commercial classes and "the lower middles." Mr. Gladstone was Don Quixote; Mr. Bright, Sancho Panza. Mr. Gladstone appealed to the nation; Mr. Bright, with sincere power and definite ideals, to a class. Mr. Gladstone appealed to the customs and institutions which he heroically assailed; Mr. Bright attacked more directly and without even the show of sympathy. Here Mr. Gladstone was Girondin; Mr. Bright, Jacobin. Mr. Gladstone's conviction of being "the legate of the skies," his electric temperament, devout genius, practical fervour and "connection," both idealised and popularised the doggedness and the narrowness of Mr. Bright's democratic doctrine. But Mr. Bright was consistent. He was against any fight for united nationality. He would never have embarked on war at all, and so could never have withdrawn from struggle at the wrong moment. He never deluded himself or others. It might be said that the author of the essay on "Church and State" led the "Nonconformist conscience" to the altar, and that the eloquent denouncer both of Church and State gave the bride away. But the chivalrous knight-errant could not quite forego the Dulcinea of his youth.

¹ This point is admirably elucidated by Mr. Ewald in his "Life and Times of Lord Beaconsfield."

It will be remembered that Mr. Gladstone, still by inadvertence, used occasionally to stumble upon the word "empire" in his speeches. Peel himself had called it "wonderful"! Lord John Russell had employed it in 1855. It was a word born with Queen Elizabeth, and familiar throughout the reign of Queen Anne. Chatham's clarion rang with it. The poet Cowper, whom none can accuse of egotism or of bombast, repeats it with a glow of pride. But Mr. Bright, unless I mistake, never condescended to breathe the name or condone the thing. Mr. Gladstone regained power, and ran riot—the riot of the best intentions in the worst sense of the phrase. The policy of "scuttle" ensued—from what motives I stop not here to inquire. We abandoned Kandahar, "annexed" through a need caused by past vacillations and repulses of the Ameer; but, together with conditions for rendering him independent of Russia's natural intrigues. We abandoned it just when the disasters of the Soudan again invited Russian encroachment. We abandoned the Transvaal at the first blush of defeat. "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform" culminated in war, extravagance, and confusion. The trumpeters of impolitic economy, proposing expenditure and yet dangling the repeal of some tax to gratify "the interests or prejudices of the party of retrenchment," were, in Disraeli's phrase of 1861, "penurious prodigals." Upright "prigs and pedants," intruding private opinions on public affairs, honest hypocrites who deceived themselves and hoped to persuade the sceptics of the world, preachers of theories to the winds, all played with crucial issues and trifled solemnly with a cynical Continent. The schoolmaster was abroad. We took Egypt against our will, and promised not to retain it. We cried, "Hands off, Austria!" and apologised for doing so. We prepared for necessitating the most exceptional war of modern times. It was the policy of panic and disunion, the policy of alternate weakness and bluster, the policy that by turns coaxed and coerced Ireland, allured and abandoned Gordon; it was a policy of private magnanimity at the public expense, and not the policy of wise consolidation and calculated outlets. It was not the policy of diplomacies at once instructed, firm, and gentle. Nor was it one of defined spheres, regulated boundaries, and

fortified "gates of empire." Yet it led us to "expenditure of blood and treasure." And if we have since—and not, as I believe, in the spirit or with the precautions of Disraeli—been forced to retrace our steps, it is due to these retail maxims of Mr. Bright, and not to the wholesale creed of Lord Beaconsfield.

But the temper of his "Imperialism," whatever may have been momentarily suspected or sneered at, was never aggressive, and always deliberate. It was for defence, not defiance; it was no grandiose illusion, no gaudy show of spurious glory; no froth or fuss of sound and fury signifying nothing.

*"'Twas not the hasty project of a day,
But the well-ripened fruit of wise delay."*

It ran utterly counter, as he declared in 1862, to "that turbulent diplomacy which distracts the mind of a people from internal improvement." Just as internally his statesmanship guarded against the predominance of any particular class, so externally the only ground for British intervention was for him the undue predominance of a particular power against English or the general interests. Throughout he sought what Lord Castlereagh had also attempted, the solidarity of Europe. No doubt, like all great men of action, he made mistakes and committed errors. He owned as much himself. But I believe that history will justify the height from which he surveyed the scene, his reach and sweep of vision, the depth, too, of an insight piercing far below the surface. In one respect at least he may be said to have resembled Napoleon—"his vast and fantastic conception of policy." I do not deny that he wished to strike the imagination; I do not deny that occasionally the direct response may have missed fire; but I submit that on the whole his policy was right, that its final effects rarely disappointed intention, and that it has left pregnant and abiding results. His aim was what the late Lord Salisbury afterwards declared as his own, to "resume the thread of our ancient empire;" and, as Macaulay has remarked of George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, who was also twitted with inconsistency: ". . . Through a long public life, and through frequent and violent changes of public feeling,

he almost invariably took that view of the great questions of his time which history has finally adopted." At home on leading issues he had strengthened the power of Government by representing worthy opinion, and by renewing the affection of the people for their institutions in the struggle to maintain united English nationality against disruptive forces. It was reserved for him to reawaken the slumbering sense of what had once been an arousing reality—the *duties* of an august empire over many associated races and religions, the due greatness of Great Britain, the high destinies and ennobling burdens of an ancient nation appointed to rule the seas.

The keynote was sounded in that very speech of 1862, when he repeated what he had often before objected to the robust Lord Palmerston's frequently flustering methods, but added that ". . . we should be vigilant to guard and prompt to vindicate the honour of the country. On an earlier occasion, he laid stress on the diplomatic duty of ". . . if necessary, saying rough things kindly, and not kind things roughly ;" while from first to last, however, as head of opposition, he disapproved a foreign policy which landed us in superfluous engagements, he always supported the Government when the crisis became really national. In 1864, criticising the Palmerstonian management of the Danish imbroglio, he remarked: ". . . I am not for war. I can contemplate with difficulty the combination of circumstances which can justify war in the present age *unless the honour of the country is likely to suffer.*"

Two more of his ruling principles were, first, that the ripe moment is half the battle in national attitude towards distant complications ; and second, the importance, under our system, of distinguishing between what a minister, backed by a large parliamentary majority, decides in home and in foreign affairs. His prescient criticisms on both the source and the course of the Crimean War illustrate the one ; his deliverance, in a speech of May, 1855—a speech prescribing a most statesmanlike policy towards both Russia and Turkey, part only of which¹ he was able more than

¹ Chiefly that of the Turkish frontier in Europe, and of the Russian in Asia.

twenty years later to execute, the other: ". . . A minister may, by the aid of a parliamentary majority, support unjust laws, and . . . a political system which a quarter of a century afterwards may, by the aid of another parliamentary majority, be condemned. The passions, the prejudices, and the party spirit that flourish in a free country may support and uphold him. . . . But when you come to foreign politics things are very different. Every step that you take is an irretrievable one. . . . You cannot rescind your policy. . . . If you make a mistake in foreign affairs ; if you enter into unwise treaties ; . . . if the scope and tendency of your foreign system are founded on a want of information or false information, . . . there is no majority in the House of Commons which can long uphold a Government under such circumstances. It will not make a Government strong, but it will make this House weak. . . ."

Throughout, his policy was that of confederation, not annexation ; of "scientific frontiers" safeguarding ascertained "spheres of influence ;" of binding, not loosing ; of a strong front but a soft mien ; of persuasion, if possible, rather than compulsion—as he always recommended in framing measures to protect labour and improve society ; of a straight line steadfastly pursued, instead of wobble, worry, and flurry ; first beating the air, and then—a retreat ; at once headstrong and weak-kneed. Although his "Imperialism" was by no means that which has occasionally since usurped the name, assuredly, in upholding the burden of Great Britain's destiny, he would never have recoiled from "the too vast orb of her fate." Disraeli's imperialism was not the bastard and braggart sort that he once styled "rowdy rhetoric ;" nor the official sort to which he sarcastically alluded when Lord Palmerston, in 1855, took credit for accepting Lord John Russell's resignation, and was "ready to stand or fall by him : " "The noble Lord is neither standing nor falling, but, on the contrary, he has remained sitting on the Treasury bench." Associated with it, lay a deep sense of obligation in the choice of high character, ability, and spirit to carry it out ; the sense too that a momentary mistake should never sacrifice excellent proconsuls to the "hare-brained chatter of irresponsible frivolity ;" the

resolve also never to shirk responsibility by making scape-goats. And, beyond all, a feeling that in dealing even with semi-barbarous nations, it was neither magnanimous, wise, nor dignified to crush them utterly, and that their feelings, prejudices, and customs ought to be respected.

Perhaps no better example could be given than his attitude regarding the events of 1879 in South Africa. The Zulus had threatened and harassed an impoverished and resourceless Transvaal. The Transvaal had requested and obtained "annexation" from Great Britain. But the Zulu chief, irritated by the suppression of the "suzerainty" arrogated by him over the Boer lands, began to beset the Natal borders. The Governor of Natal was for appeasing them. Sir Bartle Frere, however, that commanding High Commissioner of South Africa, took an opposite view, and favoured a course unmistakable for weakness. In his conferences with Cetchwayo he made requisitions, on his own initiative, exceeding his instructions from home. The result was war, with the disaster of Isandhlwana, the rally of Rorke's Drift, and eventual success. During March the matter was brought before the House of Lords in a form arranged to censure the Government policy, but so worded as to restrict the debate to the advisability of Sir Bartle Frere's recall on the ground of his unauthorised ultimatum.

Disraeli's speech is worthy of close attention, if only because it forecasts the ultimate federation of South Africa. Disraeli defended Sir Bartle on the score that to succeed in impugning error, if error it was, of a distinguished public servant chosen by the Crown, was to impugn its prerogative. "*Great services are not cancelled by one act or one single error, however it may be regretted at the moment.* If he had been recalled . . . in deference to the panic, the thoughtless panic of the hour, in deference to those who have no responsibility in the matter, and who have not weighed well and deeply investigated all the circumstances and all the arguments . . . which . . . must be appealed to to influence our opinions in such questions—no doubt a certain degree of odium might have been diverted from the heads of her Majesty's ministers, and the world would have been delighted, as it always is, to

find a victim. . . . We had only one course to pursue, . . . to take care that at this most critical period . . . affairs . . . in South Africa should be directed by one, not only qualified to direct them, but who was superior to any other individual whom we could have selected for the purpose."

It would be a bad precedent, he resumed, for the safety of the empire if an exceptional indiscretion were to efface a long record of signal ability; and he drew to the recollection of the House¹ the case of Sir James Hudson at Turin, whose conduct had been similarly attacked, and whom he, as the leader of the Opposition, had refused to make a party question, and had himself then defended on the same public considerations. But adverting to policy, he used these weighty words—

" . . . Sir Bartle Frere was selected by the noble Lord (Carnarvon) . . . chiefly to secure one great end—namely, *to carry out that policy of CONFEDERATION in South Africa* which

¹ A most interesting collection might be made of Disraeli's ready and fluent illustration by precedents. For of precedent his memory was quite as retentive as Gladstone's. In his famous Address to the Crown of 1864, he was sharply blamed for referring to "the just influence of England being lowered" in the extraordinary tangle of alternate brag and whimper that attended the Government's action in the Danish embroilment. This language was solemnly declared "unprecedented since the great days of the Norths and the Foxes." But Disraeli instantly proved that Fox himself had used language in his own Address far more violent and censorious of the Ministry in 1846. So, again, on at least two occasions when the phrases "political morality" and "political infamy" were bandied for partisan purposes, he effectively hurled back the taunts in the teeth of their inventors, and refuted present profession by past conduct. When Palmerston again twitted him, in 1846, he received a reminder which brought home the jaunty service of seven successive Administrations, and all this, though he never attacked small game, and never any "unless he had been first assailed." In the earlier numbers of *The Press* are many most interesting historical instances of how "principles" may be confused with "measures," when the latter have to be relinquished in office from the practical duty of *carrying on the Government*, while at the same time the former can be developed in other directions when the national condemnation of the particular measure is deliberate. So Fox had acted towards Catholic emancipation, Russell towards the Appropriation Bill, the Whigs in the 'forties towards the Income Tax, and Disraeli in 1852 towards "Protection." So, he argued in many previous utterances, the principle must now be followed by relieving the land, now placed under unfair conditions of competition, of its burdens.

the noble Lord had carried out on a previous occasion with regard to the North American colonies.

"If there is any policy which, in my mind, is opposed to the policy of *annexation*, it is that of *confederation*. By pursuing the policy of confederation, *we bind states together, we consolidate their resources, and we enable them to establish a strong frontier; that is the best security against annexation. I myself regard a policy of annexation with great distrust. I believe that the reasons of state which induced us to annex the Transvaal were not, on the whole, perfectly sound. But what were these circumstances? . . . The Transvaal was a territory which was no longer defended by its occupiers. . . . The annexation of that province was . . . a geographical necessity.*

"But the 'annexation' of the Transvaal was one of the reasons why those who were connected with that province might have calculated upon the permanent existence of Zululand as an independent state. I know it is said that, when we are at war, as we unfortunately now are, with the Zulus, or any other savage nation, even though we inflicted upon them some great disaster, and might effect an arrangement with them of a peaceable character, before long the same power would again attack us, unless we annexed the territory. *I have never considered that a legitimate argument in favour of annexation of a barbarous country. . . . Similar results might occur in Europe if we went to war with one of our neighbours. . . . But is that an argument why we should not hold our hand until we have completely crushed our adversary, and is that any reason why we should pursue a policy of extermination with regard to a barbarous nation with whom we happen to be at war? That is a policy which I hope will never be sanctioned by this House.*

"It is, of course, possible that we may again be involved in war with the Zulus; but it is an equal chance that in the development of circumstances in that part of the world, the Zulu people may have to invoke the aid and the alliance of England against some other people, and that the policy dictated by feelings and influence which have regulated our conduct with regard to European states, may be successfully pursued with regard to less civilised nations in a different

part of the world. *This is the policy of her Majesty's Government, and therefore they cannot be in favour of a policy of annexation, because it is directly opposed to it. . . .*"

The same considerations, those of settled and settling limits—considerations, let me repeat, directly opposed to a vague and wavering policy fraught with encroachments, alarm, and haphazard embroilment—were to actuate his policy towards Afghanistan during 1879, into the vexed details of which I shall not now enter, though they might be reviewed with instruction; the policy, too, that recognised that English vacillation would at once be magnified into weakness throughout the bazaars of the Orient.¹

The "insane annexation" of that fortress-citadel, Kandahar, it has often been objected, was the most vulnerable of Disraeli's schemes. There are many entitled to respect who still hold that it was rightly and profitably rescinded. Moreover, the tragic sequel of the heroic Cavaignari's death prejudiced the public. But the chain of events which required, the conciliatory conditions which accompanied it, and the true causes, or pretexts, for its annulment with virulence, should be carefully remembered. A former Viceroy's mistake in rebuffing the friendly overtures of the Afghans, the Muscovite move forward in Central Asia, while war was in the air, the consequent intrigues at Cabul, perturbed by dynastic broils—these were some of the warrants for its necessity. Fresh Russian manœuvres and advances, owing to a fatally feeble policy in the Soudan, were parts of the lever for its relinquishment. The highest military authorities

¹ Of Disraeli's Indian policy this much may here be noted. While allowing Russia to expand where she was entitled or compelled by war, or allowed by opening intrigues, he wished to baffle her as against Great Britain.

- (1) By an independent Afghanistan, with a proper frontier and its Indian "gates" barred.
- (2) By preventing Russia through Turkestan's approaches to Afghan and Persia's eastern border.
- (3) By precluding her from Persia's western border through the regions of the Euphrates Valley, (a) through making Turkey compact in Asia (Erzeroum and Bayazid); (b) through Cyprus guarding the Mediterranean approaches.

sanctioned it at the time, though other high military authorities disapproved a few years later. But when it is borne in mind that Disraeli's previous occupation of Quetta, the key both to Kandahar and the Pishin valley, is now a large cantonment, that a railway is ready to be laid to within no great distance of Kandahar itself on any fresh emergency, it may well be pondered whether Disraeli was mistaken, and whether time has not confounded the triflers who caricatured him as a music-hall singer, with the refrain—

"I wear a jewel in my cap—
Kandahar, Kandahar."

It was no mere question of a "buffer" state. It formed a weighty part of his great and pacific project for safeguarding the "gates" of our Indian Empire. Of the three main approaches then open to Russia—entitled in her own interests to use them, as he always admitted—the south-eastern limits of Afghanistan command the long high-road which leads to the distant north-western borders and the "gate" of Herat. Moreover, they dominate one of the important trade routes to Northern India. The remote side of the Indus can thus be used as a protection against the remoter side of the Oxus. At the same time, Disraeli subsidised the Afghans, and when their Ameer, under Russian influence, insulted our envoy, treated them at first "like spoiled children." His aim was—as always in his whole policy—a compact independence. "*Both in the East and West*," he observed, "*our object is to have prosperous, happy, and contented neighbours.*" But these are things which cannot be done in a day. You cannot settle them as you would pay a morning visit." He was building the foundations for a lasting peace. At any rate, the rectified frontier, which as he pointed out could be held by five thousand men, while a "haphazard" frontier demanded twenty times that number, is unimpugned. Nor should those who speak of a smoothed Ameer and an unruffled Cabul, after Kandahar was evacuated, forget that, since Merv has become Russian, the old dynastic intrigues and tribe feuds may, one day, readily recur at Cabul, fresh opportunities encourage Russia, and a reoccupation of this cancelled coign of vantage become imperative. "The science of

politics," as Macaulay well says, "is an-experimental science." Disraeli excelled most statesmen in his intuitive grasp of Indian affairs. Peel himself, shortly before his death, prophesied that Disraeli, "when his hour struck," would be "Governor-General of India."

The same principles, as will appear, prompted the masterly and masterful Treaty of Berlin. The same, caused him to exclaim of Russia, whose designs he had thwarted in India and foiled at Constantinople, in memorable language, that in Asia there was "room enough" for her and for us; yet that, though in the face of possible conflict, she was entitled to equip her expedition of courtesy to "cool the hoofs of its horses in the waters of the Oxus," she must be induced to withdraw it by our own counter-preventions. But what I wish here particularly to illustrate is, the psychological point of respect for and reckoning with the habits, wants, and traditions of other or alien civilisations. It rested on an idea familiar to his youth, and which he thus expressed in a soliloquy of *Alroy*: "Universal empire must not be founded on sectarian principles and exclusive rights. . . . Something must be done to bind the conquered to our conquering fortunes."

It was signally evinced in his treatment—his exceptional treatment when Opposition leader—of the Indian Mutiny. At that time Disraeli alone seemed to grasp the significance of the outbreak in its initial stage, which was viewed as a mere military rebellion, and regarded as lightly, and with as little reason, as the beginnings of the Boer War.

"It is remarkable," he urged, before the crisis became recognised, "how insignificant incidents at the first blush have appeared which have proved to be pregnant with momentous consequences. A street riot in Boston and at Paris, turned out to be the two great revolutions of modern times. Who would have supposed when we first heard of the rude visit of a Russian sailor from a port in the Black Sea to Constantinople, that we were on the eve of a critical war and the solution of the most difficult of modern problems?" It was, he contended, a national revolt, not a military mutiny. In our policy of the immediate past we had forcibly destroyed

native authority for the sole object of increasing revenue. "In spite of the law of adoption, which was the very cornerstone of Hindoo society, when a native prince died without natural heirs, though a son had been adopted as a successor, the Government of India annexed his dominions. Sattara, Berar, Jeitpore, Sumbulpore, Jhansi, were monuments of 'nefarious' acquisition. And Oude, of 'a wholesale system of spoliation,' for it had been annexed even without the pretext of a lawful failure of heirs."

We had also disturbed the settlement of property by "a new system of government." He analysed the popular law of adoption as the basis of Hindoo property, and as contrasted with its misuse in the hands of princes as a source of succession. He gave many instances, distinguishing each. "What man was safe, what feudatory, what freeholder who had not a child of his own loins, was safe throughout India? . . . The Government determined to exact all it could, not only from princes, but from the people." The exemptions from the land tax—"the *whole* taxation of the State"—had, under pretences, been continually taken away. The resumption of estates in Bengal alone had yielded the Government half a million of revenue; in Bombay alone £370,000 a year. Moreover, hereditary pensions had been commuted into personal annuities. These disturbances had naturally fomented these discontents.

We had, moreover, tampered with the Hindoo religion. ". . . I think a very great error exists as to the assumed prejudice of Hindoos with regard to what is called missionary enterprise. The fact is that . . . the Indian population generally, with the exception of the Mussulmans, are educated in a manner which peculiarly disposes them to theological inquiries. . . . They are a most ancient race; they have a mass of tradition on these subjects; a complete Indian education is to a great degree religious; their laws, their tenure of land depend upon religion; and there is no race in the world better armed at all points for theological discussion. . . . Add to this, that they can always fall back upon an educated priesthood prepared to supply them with arguments and illustrations. . . . *But what the Hindoo does*

regard with suspicion is the union of missionary enterprise with the political power of the Government. With that power he associates only one idea, violence. . . . It appears to me that the legislative council of India has, under the new principle, been constantly nibbling at the religious system of the natives." It had tried to adapt Western systems to Oriental habits. In its theoretical system of national education the "sacred Scriptures had suddenly appeared in the schools; and you cannot persuade the Hindoos that those holy books have appeared there without the concurrence and the secret sanction of the Government." Systematic female education, again, had been commanded—a most unwise step, considering "the peculiar ideas entertained by Hindoos with regard to women." But two acts had even more contributed to the ferment of native feeling. The first, that no man who changed his religion should be deprived of his inheritance. That struck at the main purpose of property in India, which consists in being a sacred trust for religious objects. The second, that a Hindoo widow might marry again, "which is looked upon by all as an outrage on their faith," uncalled for, and fraught with alarm.

But the main blunder had been the annexation of Oude without excuse, and executed in such a manner that for the first time the Mahometan princes felt that they had an identity of interest with the Indian rajahs. ". . . You see how the plot thickens. . . . Men of different races and different religions . . . traditionary feuds and long and enduring prejudices with all the elements to produce segregation, become united—Hindoos, Mahrattas, Mahommedans—secretly feeling a common interest and a common cause." Princes and proprietors are against you. "Estates as well as musnuds are in danger. You have an active society spread all over India, alarming the ryot, the peasant, respecting his religious faith. Never mind on this head what were your intentions; *the question is, what were their thoughts—what their inferences?*" And a further aggravation had resulted. The Oude sepoy, who was a yeoman, had recruited the Bengal army. "Robbed of his country and deprived of his privileges, he schemed and plotted, and sent mysterious symbols from village to

village, which prepared the native mind," agitated by princes deposed, religion insulted, soldiery discontented, for an occasion and pretext "to overthrow the British yoke." "*The Mutiny was no more a sudden impulse, than the income tax was a sudden impulse. It was the result of careful combinations, vigilant and well-organised, on the watch for opportunity. . . . I will not go into the question of the new cartridges. . . . I do not suppose any one . . . will believe that because the cartridges were believed to be, or were pretended to be believed to be, greased with pig's or cow's fat, that was the cause of this insurrection. The decline and fall of empires are not affairs of greased cartridges. Such results are occasioned by adequate causes and by an accumulation of adequate causes.*"

And now what remedies would meet such emergencies? Force, it was agreed, must now be employed. The force proposed was inadequate. "There should be an advance from Calcutta through Bengal, and an expedition up the Indus. The Militia should be called out. An Empire, not a Cabinet, was in danger."

"... But to my mind that is not all that we ought to look to. Even if we do vindicate our authority with complete success—revenge the insults that we have received, rebuild the power that has been destroyed . . . although we will assert with the highest hand our authority, although we will not rest until our unquestioned supremacy and predominance are acknowledged, . . . it is not merely as avengers that we appear. *I think that the great body of the population of that country ought to know that there is for them a future of hope. I think we ought to temper justice with mercy—justice the most severe with mercy the most indulgent. . . .* Neither internal nor external peace can in India," he urged, "be secured by British troops alone. *There must be no more annexation, no more conquest. . . .* It is totally impossible that you can ever govern 150,000,000 of men in India by merely European agency. You must meet that difficulty boldly and completely. . . . *You ought at once . . . to tell the people of India that the relation between them and their real ruler and sovereign, Queen Victoria, shall be drawn nearer. You must act upon the opinion of India on that subject immediately ; and you*

can only act upon the opinion of Eastern nations through their imagination. You ought to have a Royal Commission sent by the Queen from this country to India immediately, to inquire into the grievances of the various classes of that population. You ought to issue a royal proclamation to the people of India, declaring that the Queen of England is not a sovereign who will countenance the violation of treaties . . . that she . . . will respect their laws, their usages, their customs, and, above all, their religion. *Do this, and do this not in a corner, but in a mode and manner which will attract universal attention, and excite the general hope of Hindostan in the Queen's name and with the Queen's authority.* If that be done, simultaneously with the arrival of your forces, you may depend upon it that your military advance will be facilitated, and, I believe, your ultimate success insured."

I have abstracted this significant speech, which took three hours to deliver, because it shows how his mind grasped such situations, and how his imagination played all around them. In the same way, in 1856, he deprecated the violent interference of Sir J. Bowring (a former secretary of the Peace Society) with the Chinese, and insisted that they were "the nation of etiquette," and were not to be coerced by "a brutal freedom of manners." "If you are not," he then prophetically protested, "cautious and careful of your conduct now in dealing with China, you will find that you are likely not to extend commerce, *but to excite the jealousy of powerful states, and to involve yourselves in hostilities with nations not inferior to yourselves.* . . ."

Such were the ideas that prompted the stroke of the Suez Canal shares, and his dramatic summoning of the Indian troops to Malta when Russia was before the citadel of the Levant, and India had to be impressed; that prompted, too, his proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India; and his choice of the late Lord Lytton as a poet suited for Indian Viceroyalty; these ideas, that made him announce, shortly before he died, that "London" was "the key of India."

In this context I must dwell too for a moment on what I have already hinted concerning the temper of his diplomacy. Already, in 1860, he had recognised the full changes imposed

by the spirit of the age. ". . . In the old days," he observed, "diplomacy was conducted in a secret fashion, whilst now we had 'a candid foreign policy.' What in former times . . . would have been a soliloquy in Downing Street, now becomes a speech in the House of Commons." But that was no pretext, he also always asserted, as I shall again have to notice, for roughness and offence, for a high voice and a low hand; still less for playing censor, lecturer, or hector at once. Above all, he abominated the diplomacy which encourages by words and disappoints by deeds—the diplomacy that in 1864 promised defence to Denmark and then denied her even encouragement. Speaking then, Disraeli said: ". . . We will not threaten, and then refuse to act; we will not lure on our allies with expectations we do not mean to fulfil. And, sir, *if ever it be the lot of myself or any public men with whom I have the honour to act, to carry on important negotiations on behalf of this country . . . I trust that we at least shall not carry them on in such a manner that it will be our duty to come to Parliament to announce to the country that we have no allies, and then declare that England can never act alone.*" In diplomacy, moreover, he laid great stress—as is witnessed by a striking passage in *Endymion*—on the need for a minister's personal acquaintance with the chief actors on the foreign stage, and with the temper of the people whose fortunes are in their hands.¹

All these governing issues underlay his great Berlin Treaty. Its first principle was to uphold the *effective* independence of Turkey. Several absurdities have been alleged on this head. It was also bruited for political ends that, as a Semite,² he fostered the Moslem, whom, as a Briton, he should have suppressed.

¹ ". . . Do you think a man like that, called upon to deal with a Metternich or a Pozzo, has no advantage over an individual who never leaves his chair in Downing Street except to kill grouse? Pah! Metternich and Pozzo know very well that Lord Roehampton knows them. . . ." "Roehampton" is Palmerston. The prophecy of the Congress repeats one in *Contarini*.

² Of the many passages that may be read in this connection, including that fine ironical one of the Feast of Tabernacles in *Tancred*, paralleled by that about "Moses Lump" in Heine, and the telling chapter

This is not only untrue, but inaccurate. It is the sort of mistake adopted by such as imagine Mahomet to have been a Turk. Disraeli had early in life travelled far into the East, had been present at Yanina during an insurrection, had known leading pachas (one of whom consulted him), and observed inner intrigues. But while the Moslem soldier and peasant always impressed him, he detested the system of the Sultan. An early passage records this detestation. Pondering, in *Contarini Fleming*, the failure of successive Governments to rid Asia of "the revelations of the son of Abdallah," he calls its whole object one "to convert man into a fanatic slave." His two earlier romances, *Alroy* and *Iskander*, both glow with this theme—rebellion against Islam. The picturesqueness, both in scenery and history, of all Mediterranean countries,¹ fascinated him; so did the charm of the East, which, as a stripling, he defined as "repose." But it was the habitation of the Turk, not the Turk, that exercised the spell. "Live a little longer in these countries before you hazard an opinion as to their conduct," says one of his characters. "Do you

in the *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, I will only cite one less familiar from *Alroy*: "... All was silent; alone the Hebrew prince stood, amid the regal creation of the Macedonian captains. Empires and dynasties flourish and pass away; the proud metropolis becomes a solitude, the conquering kingdom even a desert; but Israel still remains, still a descendant of the most ancient kings breathed amid these royal ruins, and still the eternal sun could never arise without gilding the towers of living Jerusalem." This (with its after-irony of "Alroy's" seizure by the Kourdish bandits) may be compared with the satire in which Disraeli encountered Mr. Newdegate's appeals to "prophecy:" "... They have survived the Pharaohs, they have survived the Cæsars, they have survived the Antonines and the Seleucidæ, and I think they will survive the arguments of the right honourable member. . . ." Mr. Morley tells that Mr. Gladstone said that Disraeli asserted that only those nations that behaved well to the Jews prospered. Disraeli, in saying so, however, only repeated a *dictum* of Frederick the Great.

¹ "Say what they like," so "Herbert" in *Venetia*, "there is a spell in the shores of the Mediterranean Sea which no others can rival. Never was such a union of natural loveliness and magical associations! On these shores have risen all that interests us in the past—Egypt and Palestine, Greece, Rome, and Carthage, Moorish Spain and feudal Italy. These shores have yielded us our religion, our arts, our literature, and our laws. If all that we have gained from the shores of the Mediterranean was erased from the memory of man, we should be savages."

indeed think that the rebel beys of Albania were so simple? . . . The practice of politics in the East may be described by one word, dissimulation . . ."

An adverse opinion also characterises his letters from the East, some of which are embodied in his books. *Alroy*, dedicated to Jerusalem, as *Iskander*¹ is to Athens, are neither of them favourable to Turkey. And even the Turkish want of humour annoyed him. "I never offered an opinion till I was sixty," says the old Turk in the last romance, "and then it was one which had been in our family for a century." He detested fanatics as he detested bores, but he loved purpose; and the sole thing that recommended the Turk to him was that, though a fanatic and a bore, he was both for a purpose. Moreover, up to 1840 the Greeks were more favourable to the Jews than the Turks; and it can scarcely be contended that his attitude to the Afghans—who are Semite by race—was prejudiced by the fact. No; if we seek for a Semitic affinity in Disraeli outside that to Israel, we must find it in that to the Saracens of Spain.

But neither is the stricture of his principle valid. As is well known, in upholding the independence of Turkey, he was following in the steps of his predecessors and indorsing the known views of two skilled diplomatists, Sir Robert Morier and Sir Henry Layard, whose political tenets were opposite to Disraeli's. He had long before made up his mind on this subject, and had defined Turkey as a "barrier" against aggression. In a speech towards the close of the Crimean War—"the Coalition War"—a speech in which he blamed the Government for their treatment of Russia, and considered Russia's "preponderance" towards Turkey, he observed: ". . . I believe that there are elements, when Turkey shall be more fairly treated—and never has any country been more unfairly treated than Turkey, especially within the last two years—for securing the independence of her empire, and (what is to us of vital interest) preventing Constantinople from becoming an appanage to any great military power."

By a tripartite treaty we, conjointly with Russia, Austria,

¹ It was translated into Greek, as *Alroy* was into Hebrew.

and France, were allies bound to maintain the territorial integrity of Turkey—that is, whatever dispositions might be made, she must retain a compact and self-inclosed dominion. And why had this become a necessity for England, which is an Eastern as well as a Western power? There was a double cause—our Indian Empire and our Mediterranean trade; it was in the interest of both that a comparatively weak power should occupy the very key of the position—an historical capital whose very name symbolises empire, and whose situation, facing both east and west, dominates the Levant and commands the high-road of the Orient. As between Greece and Russia, the first undoubtedly possesses the claims of race and inheritance. The second is an interloper, and her “Greekness” springs from ecclesiastical and political usurpation. The Greek Macedonians are more hostile to Russia than to Turkey. Before now the Greeks have expressed their gratitude that Disraeli saved them from being sucked into a huge Bulgaria. It was in the interest of European peace that Constantinople should not be in the hands of a power so small, so restive, so motley, so fluid as Greece. It was in the interest of India that the Moslem pope should be upheld. It was in the interest, moreover, of the Christian subjects of the Porte themselves that Turkey should be so tied and so pledged to the great military and maritime powers in concert, that they could exact real guarantees for their protection, should brutal misbehaviour re-arise, and that the work of humanity should be left to none of these powers apart, and exposed to the temptation of indulging separate ambitions and disturbing the peace of the world. If united selfishness has deterred them from doing their duty, that must not be laid to the treaty’s charge. “Those,” he said, in 1876, “who suppose that England ever would uphold, or at this moment particularly is upholding, Turkey from blind superstition and from a want of sympathy with the highest aspirations of humanity, are deceived. What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England;” and before the Congress, he again solemnly pointed out that worse, more widespread, and far more lasting agonies would be caused to myriads abroad if the misguided

excitement of several sections at home were to prevail, than even by any horrors which must move both indignation and sympathy in every heart.

Into the detailed controversies of the "Bulgarian atrocities" agitation I will not here enter. It is now generally confessed that Disraeli was right not to be led away by the sensational exaggerations manufactured for Russian purposes abroad, and retailed, sometimes, for political purposes at home. Horrible savageries, of course, happened on both sides in such a war, and those horrors, from the nature of their theatre, were Oriental. But that they were bound up with racial feuds, and were in full evidence on the other side, was vouched for to me—and in great detail—some ten years after their occurrence, by Sir William White, then Ambassador at Constantinople, and by the then consul, himself a leading member of the committee for their investigation. These authorities went much further in their declarations than ever Disraeli did, with his extreme reticence in public. Indeed, they told me that the whole source of the war had been engineered by the acute irritations of Russian diplomacy, which, as Lord Derby long ago expressed it, "has never proceeded by storm, but by sap and mine."

The true facts should not be blinked. With regard to Turkey in Europe they are both racial, political, and ecclesiastical. The race aspect was powerful with Disraeli. He always believed it to be "the key of history, and the surest clue to the characters of men in all ages." In England he discerned the blend of "Saxon industry and Norman manners." While it was race again that had made national institutions "the ramparts of the multitude against large estates exercising political power derived from a limited class." Practically, it is still a question of the Slav against both Greeks (whom they have murdered) and Albanians, who themselves massacre the Serbs. Politically, it is a question of Russian influence and both Austrian and Italian jealousy. Ecclesiastically, it is a question of the freed principalities against the Patriarch of Constantinople; who, since the very time when Russia first newly pretended to the Byzantine inheritance of the Greeks, became (oddly enough) a nominee of the Sultan. From the outset

Disraeli determined to undo that larger Bulgaria, stretching to the Ægean, involving all the international conflicts just hinted, and ranging from the Danube to Salonica, which Russia proposed by the clandestine Treaty of San Stefano. As is familiar, he founded a smaller Bulgaria, barriered by the Balkans, dividing it into two portions—Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia—in the last of which he implanted autonomy. It has often been said that the sequel proved him futile, for the two slices of the big worm have since been repieced. But the events of 1885–86 which caused this reunion were the gift, not of Russian ascendancy, but of those very institutions which Disraeli created. Again, it has been popularly put as if the treaty were not his own policy and had not endured. I could most easily prove the error of both these propositions. As regards the first, just as in the Reform Bill of 1867, the co-operation of both parties was necessary for the limited achievement of his views, so it fared with the need for European concert in the Berlin Treaty. But his ideas had been sketched out during the Crimean War, and the restoration of that very concert, which still subsists, was a birth of the treaty. The Berlin Treaty restored not only British prestige, but—as a foreign statesman remarked—Britain's moral influence in the councils of Europe. It was so hailed in England, and this, as Mr. Roebuck acknowledged, was its ground for enthusiastic national support. Russia withdrew from Constantinople. Both the Dardanelles and the Turkish frontier in Europe were assured. A Sultan, then beset with bankruptcy and dynastic troubles, was given his chance of heading a party of reform championed by Midhat. Turkey was rendered compact, and lopped of mongrel provinces, while she obtained the port of Burgos on the Black Sea as a check to Russia. As regards Turkey in Asia, Disraeli's aim, as I have already outlined, was Indian. Erzeroum, Bayazid, Alashkerd, proved powerful buffers against Russian predominance; and Russia still sways the mongrel Bessarabia then restored to her. It is now recognised that Russia, to traverse Persia, would encounter a British bayonet at every step. Disraeli's great object, like Palmerston's, was to prevent Turkey from becoming a fief to Russia, and the Black Sea from remaining a mere Russian

lake, as the repudiation by Mr. Gladstone, in 1871, of the clause in the Treaty of Paris, for which the Crimean War had been resumed, subsequently empowered it to become. Turkey, Disraeli had written in *The Press* of May 21, 1853, was "a necessary evil in the European system," but one preferable to some others, and more likely to prevent general anarchy and bloodshed. And he recalled Prince Potemkin's old inscription on the gates of Chusan: "This is the road to Constantinople." The standing danger was the interposal of Russian ambition on the perpetual plea of a Christian protectorate—resented by many of the Christian provinces themselves—in order to constitute Turkey a Russian province, and to spread a dominion less fanatical, perhaps, but even more merciless and repressive in Europe, however civilising it has proved in portions of Central Asia. His scheme, compassing autonomy here, independence there, compactness, the power to govern and the accountability to improve, everywhere was one of development. It held within it, as he said, the seeds of "Evolution."

How did Disraeli diagnose Russia's legitimate aspirations? He certainly neither ignored nor condemned them, but he distinguished between aspirations legitimate and illegitimate. Speaking in 1871, after Russia had violated and Mr. Gladstone had torn up the Black Sea Clause, Disraeli criticised the course which the Ministry had pursued.

". . . Russia has a policy, as every great power has a policy, and she has as much right to have a policy as Germany or England. I believe the policy of Russia, taking a general view of it, to have been a legitimate policy, though it may have been inevitably a disturbing policy. When you have a great country in the centre of Europe, with an immense territory, with a numerous and yet, as compared with its colossal area, a sparse population, producing human food to any extent, in addition to certain most valuable raw materials, it is quite clear that a people so situated, practically without any seaboard, would never rest until it had found its way to the coast, and could have a mode of communicating easily with other nations, and exchanging its products with them.

Well, for two hundred years Russia has pursued that policy ; it has been *a legitimate though disturbing policy*. It has cost Sweden provinces, and it has cost Turkey provinces. But no wise statesman could help feeling that it was a legitimate policy—a policy which it was impossible to resist, and one which the general verdict of the world recognised—that *Russia should find her way to the sea-coast*. She has completely accomplished it. She has admirable seaports ; she can communicate with every part of the world, and she has profited accordingly.

“ But at the end of the last century she advanced a new view. It was not a national policy ; it was invented by the then ruler of Russia—a woman, a stranger, and an usurper—and that policy was that she must have the capital of the Turkish Empire. That was not a legitimate, that was a disturbing policy. It was a policy like the French desire to have the Rhine—false in principle. She had no moral claim to Constantinople ; she did not represent the races to which it once belonged ; she had no political necessity to go there, because she already had two capitals. Therefore it was not a legitimate but a disturbing policy. As the illegitimate desire of France to have the Rhine has led to the prostration of France, so the illegitimate desire of Russia to have Constantinople led to the prostration of Russia. . . . ”

The means used by Disraeli for preserving the peace of Europe and protecting our Eastern Empire were, in the rough, on the lines I have tried to shadow. First of all, refusing to allow the creation of an unwieldy and anarchic province of discordant races which could not become a coherent nation, he reduced the Bulgaria designed under the San Stefano arrangement by two-thirds, created Eastern Roumelia, with a framed constitution, south of the Balkans, and yielded the rest to Turkey. By this measure not only was Bulgaria prevented from being bulky and hybrid, but the Macedonian Greeks (preponderant over Slavs and Serbs) were saved from absorption. Turkey was delimited in Europe by the natural fastnesses of the Balkans—one that even in his youth Disraeli marked as the real frontier. Turkey was pledged to reform her administration, while the signatories also guaranteed her

from Russian aggression. Both Russia and Turkey, therefore—and, indeed, all Europe—knew that England was in earnest about her Indian Empire. Turkey's position was ascertained, so was Russia's. Russia was propitiated by Bessarabia, Kars, Ardahan, and Batoum; Turkey, gratified by the retention of the great portion of what was to have been Bulgaria's, by the retention of Bayazid, by the great region of Erzeroum, and of the valley of Alashkerd.

Further, Cyprus fell to the lot of England as a post "of arms," a strategical, a coasting and a coaling port of high value for our Indian Empire, commanding as it does the high-route which leads to the Euphrates Valley, and useful besides for Egypt. He had noted this island on his youthful trip in the East as most opportune for the purpose.¹

Disraeli's whole purview, in these arrangements, apart from the defence of Great Britain, was to ensure a feasible government under the watch of the European concert. This intention is well expressed by the late Master of Balliol, writing in 1877: ". . . I want to see the higher civilisation of Europe combining against the lower and offering something like a paternal government to . . . the East. *But then there is such a danger of taking away the government which they have and substituting only chaos.* This might be avoided if the European Powers would jointly take up their cause. . . ."

I may be allowed to recall, in relation to some of these matters, a few of Disraeli's immediate after-utterances. They are too often neglected.

As regards the English guarantee of the Porte against Russian offence, attained by the Convention of Constantinople which supplemented the treaty, he observed—

" . . . Suppose now . . . the settlement of Europe had not included the Convention of Constantinople and the occupation of the isle of Cyprus, . . . what might . . . have occurred? In ten, fifteen, or twenty years, the power and resources of Russia having revived, some quarrel would again have occurred, Bulgarian or otherwise, and in all probability the armies of Russia would have been assailing the Ottoman

¹ He mentions it both in his *Home Letters* and in *Tancred* as to be acquired by England.

dominions, both in Europe and Asia ; and enveloping and inclosing the city of Constantinople, and its all-powerful position. Well, what would be the probable conduct under these circumstances of the Government . . . whatever party might be in power ? *I fear there might be hesitation for a time—a want of decision, a want of firmness ;* but no one doubts that ultimately England would have said, ‘This will never do ; we must prevent the conquest of Asia Minor ; we must interfere in this matter and arrest the course of Russia. . . .’ Well, then, that being the case, I say it is extremely important that this country *should take a step beforehand* which should indicate what the policy of England would be. . . . The responsibilities of England are practically diminished by the course we have taken. . . . One of the results of my attending the Congress of Berlin has been to prove, what I always suspected to be an absolute fact, that neither the Crimean, nor this horrible devastating war which has just terminated, would have taken place if England had spoken *with the necessary firmness*. Russia had complaints to make against this country ; that neither in the case of the Crimean War, nor on this occasion—and I don’t shrink from my share of the responsibility in this matter—*was the voice of England so clear and decided as to exercise a due share in the guidance of European opinion.*” Without such finality the treaty could only have been patchwork. “That was not the idea of public duty entertained by my noble friend and myself. We thought the time had come when we should take steps which would produce some order out of the anarchy chaos that had so long prevailed. We asked ourselves was it absolutely a necessity that the fairest provinces of the world should be the most devastated and the most ill-used, and for this reason, that there is no security for life and property so long as that country is in perpetual fear of invasion and aggression. . . . *I hold that we have laid the foundation of a state of affairs which may open a new continent to the civilisation of Europe,* and that the welfare of the world, and the wealth of the world, may be increased by availing ourselves of that tranquillity and order which the more intimate connection of that country with England will now produce. . . .” And, added

the late Lord Salisbury, "We were striving to pick up the thread—the broken thread—of England's old imperial position."

Before this utterance Disraeli had stated that the Convention's object was not only to confirm "tranquillity and order," but to safeguard India. "We have a substantial interest in the East; it is a commanding interest, and its behest must be obeyed."—"In taking Cyprus," he continued, "the movement is not Mediterranean, it is Indian;" and, speaking of Russia's temptation to profit by a state of things which tended to resolve the societies of Asia Minor and the countries beyond into the anarchy of original elements, he used the familiar words: ". . . *There is no reason for these constant wars, or fears of wars between Russia and England.* Before the circumstances which led to the recent disastrous war, when none of those events which we have seen agitating the world had occurred, and when we were speaking in another place of the conduct of Russia in Central Asia, *I vindicated that conduct, which I thought was unjustly attacked, and I said then, what I repeat now, there is room enough for Russia and England in Asia.*"

On the other hand, in another speech alluding to Austria's trusteeship of Bosnia, he said it permitted us to check, ". . . I should hope for ever, that Pan-Slavist confederacy and conspiracy which has already proved so disadvantageous to the happiness of the world." Nobody acquainted with Austria's desire for Salonica, Italy's dread of that possibility, and the fear of one at any rate of these powers lest Greece should absorb Albania, can fail to grasp the relevance of this hope.

It should be borne in mind that at the time these deliverances were made Abdul Hamid¹ was not what he

¹ In 1878, Disraeli, after emphasising the Sultan's friendliness to Greece and the value of a Græco-Turk *entente* as a bar to "Pan-Slavic monopoly," said: ". . . No prince, probably, that has ever lived has gone through such a series of catastrophes. One of his predecessors commits suicide; his immediate predecessor is subject to a visitation even more awful. The moment he ascends the throne, his ministers are assassinated. A conspiracy breaks out in his own palace, and then

seems since to have become. He was then—and the late Sir William White was my informant—an enthusiastic reformer, with the wise and accomplished Midhat for his inspirer. Had he remained so Turkey would have achieved much for Asia Minor. Even now, Abdul may perhaps be sometimes excused for mistrusting the cant of reform on the part of unreforming powers. Perhaps it is impossible long to be Sultan of Turkey without falling into the faults bred by habitual suspicion. Perhaps the varying conduct of Western Powers conduces to cynicism. But at this period the Armenians themselves were hopeful. With the Russian aspiration I sympathise. Russia is destined to expansion and greatness; she is a cold power desiring to be warm, pushed by a military power eager to be forward. But she is also that strange anomaly—a new empire with a mediæval standard. With the freezing officialism of Russia, giant in profession and pigmy in practice, I entertain no sympathy at all. Nor are the Cossack barbarities a whit less infamous than those of the Bashi-Bazouks. What is always to be dreaded is the periodical recurrence of race-hatreds and barbarism on the confines of both countries. Turkey comprises many more races than Russia; at such times, therefore, when bad governors incense brutalised men, unspeakable horrors eclipse imagination and baffle even sympathy. Bulgarian or Servian Slavs massacre Macedonian Greeks, Albanians butcher Macedonian Serbs, and Turks both massacre and torture Macedonian Slavs. The name of the particular province inflamed at a specific time by revolutionary committees is constantly used as if designating the natural uprising of a united people or of a single race; but this is not the case. The recent blood-orgy, however, connived at by more than one of the powers, would seem to disgrace the Ottoman beyond any other single group concerned. And yet the normal Turk—soldier or peasant—is

he learns that his kingdom is invaded, . . . and that his enemy is at his gates; yet with all these trials, . . . he has never swerved in . . . the feeling of a desire to deal with Greece in a spirit of friendship. . . . He is apparently a man whose . . . impulses are good, . . . and where impulses are good, there is always hope."

not naturally brutal. It is only when insulted fanaticism demented him that he becomes so ; and his fanaticism seldom fans the flames unprovoked by foreign designs. Of course nothing could be more desirable than a practical, a permanent understanding with Russia ; nothing more desirable than a complete reform of European Turkey, which the joint powers could enforce if they would unite. Both are consummations devoutly to be wished. But bearing in mind the panther tread of Russian diplomacies, their recent developments in China and Japan, their constant designs on India and in Persia, their stealthy hankering after Constantinople, their earlier annexation even of American territory, as Disraeli pointed out—is the former practical ? By all means let Russia expand, as she has a right to expand ; but by all means let England ascertain the due spheres of her expansion, and retain her own empire, that gives justice and freedom to countless races once oppressed. Nor let any cant of whatever nature blind her eyes to the hard issues.

Throughout his pronouncements on foreign affairs is to be discerned his construction of “balance of power” and of “interference.” As regards the first, his principles are well defined in a speech of 1864. “. . . The proper meaning of ‘balance of power’ is *security for communities* in general against a predominant and particular power.” It also follows “that you have to take into your consideration states and influences that are not to be counted among the European powers.” Every crisis in Europe bears on America and the colonies. So early as 1848 he had pointed out that, though insulted, “. . . yet our welfare as a great colonial power was so intimately connected with European politics, that in seasons of crisis we could only retire from interference at the expense not only of our prestige but of our safety.” The “balance of power” principle he derived from Bolingbroke ; he also adopted from Bolingbroke his principle of “interference.”

“. . . There are conditions,” he laid it down in 1860, “under which it may be our imperative duty to interfere. *We may clearly interfere in the affairs of foreign countries when the interests or the honour of England are at stake, or when, in our opinion, the independence of Europe is menaced.*

But a great responsibility devolves upon that minister who has to decide when those conditions have arisen ; and he who makes a mistake upon that subject, he who involves his country in interference or in war under the idea that the interests or honour of the country are concerned, when neither is substantially involved, he who involves the country in interference or war because he believes the independence of Europe is menaced, when, in fact, it is not in danger, makes of course a great, a fatal mistake. *The general principle that we ought not to interfere in the affairs of foreign nations, unless there is a clear necessity, and that, generally speaking, it ought to be held a political dogma that the people of other countries should SETTLE THEIR OWN AFFAIRS without the introduction of foreign influence or foreign power, is one which I trust the House . . . will cordially adhere to. . . .*" To this let me add a passage from the great Denmark speech of 1864. It is its corollary—

" . . . By the just influence of England in the councils of Europe, I mean an influence contradistinguished from that which is obtained by intrigue and secret understanding ; I mean an influence *that results from the conviction of foreign powers that our resources are great, and that our policy is moderate and steadfast. . . .* I lay this down as a great principle which cannot be controverted in the management of our foreign affairs. *If England is resolved upon a particular policy, war is not probable.*"

One illustration is worth many arguments. At the Berlin Congress affairs at a time began to march ill. The Russian plenipotentiary was making mischief. Disraeli quietly pencilled some requisitions on the part of England and forwarded them to him. " If you accept these," he said, " peace—if not, war."

Bearing these two further principles of foreign policy in mind, let me endeavour to sketch Disraeli's attitude towards various other powers. With America I deal separately in the next chapter.

Friendship with France amounted with him almost to a passion, and none would have rejoiced more heartily at the amity which our King has recently renewed. He himself knew the French well, and in the 'forties had met with the most

cordial welcome on two occasions from the King, the Court, the lights of literature and science, the politicians and the people. He thought that with French alliance other powers might exclaim as Shakespeare's Constance exclaimed—

“France friends with England, what become of me !”

France was the nation of society, the nurse of arts and manners. England and France supplied reciprocal wants. Their friendship is a pledge for European peace. Had the Czar been made aware of it in time, the blunder and misfortune of the Crimean War would not have taken place. In *Coningsby* he called Paris “the university of the world,” and enlarged on commercial exchange between two first-class powers in a vein at once light and serious. In 1845, France regarded Peel as the guardian of Anglo-French cordiality, and feared the chance of Palmerston's return to office as fraught with a possible treatment of “the French connection with levity or disregard.” Louis Philippe relieved his anxieties by consulting Disraeli on this point.¹

“A good understanding,” was Disraeli's interpretation in 1864, “between England and France is simply this—that so far as the influence of these two great powers extends, the affairs of the world shall be conducted by their co-operation instead of by their rivalry. *But co-operation requires not merely identity of interest but reciprocal good feeling. In public as well as in private affairs, a certain degree of sentiment is necessary for the happy conduct of matters.*” In another speech ten years earlier he also observed that Anglo-French relations were not dynastic, but depended on commercial interests.

Perhaps his most remarkable expression on this theme occurs in a speech of 1853,² when Sir James Graham had gone about saying that the Emperor was a despot who turned his people into slaves, and when there was one of those periodical outbursts of Gallophobia to which we are accustomed. Disraeli pointed out that peace with France had then subsisted for forty years, that social relations had multiplied, that an

¹ Cf. his *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, p. 170.

² This was the speech in which Disraeli styled himself as not only a devoted parliamentarian, but “a gentleman of the Press.”

identity of interest in high policy existed. He exploded the fallacy that national hostility was a true tradition. Even Agincourt and Crécy stood for a struggle between two princes rather than between two nations. ". . . No one can deny that both Queen Elizabeth and the Lord Protector looked to that alliance as the basis of their foreign connections. No one can deny that there was one subject on which even the brilliant Bolingbroke and the sagacious Walpole were agreed—and that was the great importance of cultivating an alliance, or good understanding, with France. At a later date the most eminent of the statesmen of this century, Mr. Pitt, formed his system on this principle. . . ." The traditional prejudice, therefore, was the reverse of true. The natural tendency was to concord, for after the great European revolutions at the close of the eighteenth and dawn of the nineteenth centuries, a durable peace had emerged. Nor were the defences (which Sir Robert Peel had really inaugurated) due to the rise of the Third Napoleon; they were due to the changes in scientific warfare. It was true that in France there was then a military government. "But there is a great error also, if history is to guide us, in assuming that because a country is governed by an army, that army must be extremely anxious to conquer other countries." The lust for conquest under militarism is due to home-uneasiness, and from a feeling in the army that its power is not felt. The real prejudice was that France had subverted her constitution. This prejudice had foundation, but it was the very cause of those acts which indiscreet journalism was now criticising so angrily. "Some years ago," he resumed (and the glimpse of Louis Philippe is interesting), "I had occasion frequently to visit France. I found that country then under the mild sway of a constitutional monarch—of a prince who, from temper as well as policy, was humane and beneficent. I know that at that time the Press was free. I know that at that time the Parliament of France was . . . distinguished by its eloquence, and by a dialectic power that probably even our own House of Commons has never surpassed. I know that under these circumstances France arrived at a pitch of material prosperity

which it had never before reached. I know also that after a reign of unbroken prosperity of long duration, when he was aged, when he was in sorrow, and when he was suffering under overwhelming indisposition, this same prince was rudely expelled from his capital,¹ and was denounced as a poltroon by all the journals of England, because he did not command his troops to fire upon the people. Well, other powers and other princes have since occupied his seat, who have asserted their authority in a very different way, and are denounced in the same organs as tyrants because they did order their troops to fire upon the people. I think every man has a right to have his feelings upon these subjects; but what is the moral I presume to draw upon these circumstances? It is this, that it is extremely difficult to form an opinion upon French politics; *and that so long as the French people are exact in their commercial transactions and friendly in their political relations, it is just as well that we should not interfere with their management of their domestic concerns.*"

The same ideas animated him in 1854, when he pointed out that ten years earlier the Czar had, by a secret manœuvre, sought to provoke an estrangement which had not endured, but which the Czar was led to believe enduring when the Crimean War broke out. The same guided his hearty approval of Mr. Cobden's aims in relation to France. What he objected to in the later Italian Treaty was that it embodied "reciprocity" too late—at a time when for England reciprocity could secure no more. In 1858—the Walewski affair—Disraeli termed our alliance with France "the key and corner-stone of modern civilisation." After the Treaty of Villafranca, Disraeli advised England not "to go to congresses and conferences in fine dresses and ribands, to enjoy the petty vanity of settling the fate of petty princes," but to have recourse to "your ally the Emperor of the French"—a monarch who, as Disraeli said some years afterwards, ". . . has been created and can only be maintained by the sympathies of his people—a proud,

¹ Disraeli always maintained that the expulsion of Louis Philippe was the act of the secret societies, and not that of the French nation. He had reason to know. His letters in 1848 are full of gloom regarding the outlook in Europe. So were Carlyle's.

imperious, and apt to be discontented people." In 1860, when many were jubilant over Italy's united nationality, Disraeli, demonstrating its present incompleteness, asserted that its accomplishment must come not through the "moral influence of England," but "by the will and the sword of France"—though this did not blind him to contingent perils.

"It is the will of France that can alone restore Rome to the Italians. It is the sword of France, if any sword can do it, that alone can free Venetia from the Austrians." But in a long and splendid speech he urged, almost prophetically, that by forcing the French Emperor to a policy which he was unwilling to pursue, we should eventually give him a dangerous preponderance: ". . . It will be in his power . . . to make those greater changes and *aim at those greater results which I will only intimate and not attempt to describe.*" In 1864, on the Danish crisis, advocating firmness of action following on firmness of statement, he once more repeated: ". . . If there is, under these circumstances, a cordial alliance between England and France, war is most difficult; but if there is a thorough understanding between England, France, and Russia, war is impossible." Though here, again, this consideration would not deter him from the single object of England's welfare.

Finally, he consulted French sentiment in the delicate arrangement at Berlin. ". . . There is no step of this kind that I would take without considering the effect it might have upon the feelings of France—a nation to whom we are bound by almost every tie that can unite a people. . . . We avoided Egypt, knowing how susceptible France is with regard to Egypt; we avoided Syria; . . . and we avoided availing ourselves of any part of the *terra firma*, because we would not hurt the feelings or excite the suspicions of France. . . . But the interests of France . . . are, as she acknowledges, sentimental and traditionary interests; and although I respect them, . . . we must remember that our connection with the East is not merely an affair of sentiment and tradition, but that we have urgent and substantial and enormous interests which we must guard and keep."

I pass now to Germany. Prussia, in his early days, he had described as "the Persia" of Europe ; the Austrians as "the Chinese." Some thirty years before Germany became united, and Bismarck had brandished the mailed fist, Disraeli regarded much in the air as "dreamy and dangerous nonsense ;" he considered theory and "inner consciousness" as distinctive of the German nature, and he failed to perceive the rising wave of its instinct for united nationality. Here certainly his foresight flagged. When Prussia dismembered Denmark, he pointed out that by the arguments used she, too, might be deprived of Posen. Here certainly his foresight failed. But when the great war broke out, he rose to the occasion and realised its meaning to the full. "It is no common war," he said at the onset, "like that between Prussia and Austria, or like the Italian war in which France was engaged some years ago ; nor is it like the Crimean War. This war represents the German revolution, a greater *political* event than the French Revolution of last century. I don't say a greater or as great a social event. What its social consequences may be are in the future. Not a single principle, accepted by all statesmen for guidance in the management of our foreign affairs up to six months ago, any longer exists. There is not a diplomatic tradition that has not been swept away. You have a new world, new influences at work, new and unknown objects and dangers with which to cope, at present involved in the obscurity incident to the novelty of such affairs. . . . Lord Palmerston, eminently a practical man, trimmed the ship of State and shaped its policy with a view to preserve an equilibrium in Europe. But what has come to pass ? The balance of power has been entirely destroyed, and the country which suffers, and feels the effects of this great change most, is England." He recommended an attitude of "armed neutrality," such as Austria's occupation of the Danubian provinces, which certainly abridged the Crimean War. Such a policy tends to prevent, if possible, to shorten if it cannot prevent a conflict ; and when that conflict is finished, to temper the terms for the vanquished. Had it been feasible in the then state of our armaments, it might have produced lasting results. As time went on Disraeli

grew to understand Germany better, though he never ceased to regret the humiliation to France. In Bismarck, however, he found a powerful friend, and one of his last utterances regarding Germany was to praise her as a peacemaker.

At the Berlin Congress Lord Beaconsfield made his speeches in English. This was of design. A story was told that an eminent English diplomatist, in attendance on his chief, had adroitly suggested this course out of apprehension that "Dizzy's" French accent might not impress foreign representatives. But however this may have been, I am convinced it was not the real reason, which was to assert the leadership of Great Britain.

Disraeli's French was fluent, if insular. In Italian he was naturally proficient. Italian literature was familiar to him, and next to Dante, he was fondest of Alfieri, a fine passage from whom, it will be remembered, he quotes in *Lothair*. He knew German well enough to read it.

No sentiment surrounded his favour to Austria. It was her partition that he feared. So early as 1848 he objected, from the sole standpoint of England's interest, to championing the Magyars and the Italians against Austria, the Sicilians against Naples. We should, he then said, "mind our own business." And in 1856, when he combated the views of his opponents who sighed for the dismemberment of Russia, he also pointed out the dangers to European peace that must attend the dismemberment of Austria. The complete dismemberment of that empire—partly a few years later to be accomplished—would involve the independence of Hungary and the emancipation of Italy.

With Italy herself he nourished, indeed, an innate sympathy, and for her a sentimental attachment. In all his reveries Venice and Rome figure no less frequently than do Athens and Jerusalem; and afterwards none applauded Daniel Manin more than he. Italy is the haunting refrain of *Venetia*, Venice of *Contarini Fleming*, Rome romanticises *Lothair*. Perhaps a leaven of his old enthusiasm for "a cluster of small states" and "federal unions" still mingled with the practical outlook which also made him sacrifice many of his personal emotions to the cold requirements of

statesmanship. "Federal unions," he had sighed in *Contarini*, "would preserve us from the consequences of local jealousy."—"There would be more genius, and, what is of more importance, much more felicity."—"Italy might then revive." However this may be—and I for one regret his forced attitude towards the first flutter of Italian freedom—or whether his late acquaintance with Metternich had coloured his ideas, there can be no doubt of their constraining cause. His public views always confined themselves to what he believed was for the benefit of Great Britain. And in this instance—" . . . If we, or any other power," he urged, "should forcibly interfere in the affairs of Italy with the view of changing the political settlement of that country, the result will be, as in the case of an attempt to dismember Russia, one of those protracted wars that might fatally exhaust this country, and which, even supposing it to be successful, would leave Italy very possibly not in the possession of Austria, but under the dominion of some other power as little national." It should be recollected that 1858-61 were critical years for Anglo-French relations. After Palmerston's Orsini imbroglio we were more than once on the verge of war with France. Luckily, England was never forced into interference. Luckily, Italy regained her independence, through two commanding individualities. But it was history that warned Disraeli. Italy had been the battle-field of Austria and Spain, and a prolific source of war, disorder, and havoc throughout the eighteenth century. "A war in Italy," he said in 1859, "is not a war in a corner. An Italian war may by possibility be an European war. The waters of the Adriatic cannot be disturbed without agitating the waters of the Rhine. The port of Trieste is not a mere Italian port. It is a port which belongs to the Italian confederation, and an attack on Trieste is not an attack on Austria alone, but also on Germany. If war springs up beyond the precincts of Italy, *England has interests not merely from . . . those enlightened principles of civilisation which make her look with an adverse eye on aught that would disturb the peace of the world, but England may be interested from material considerations of the most urgent and momentous character.*" It was from England's vantage-ground

alone that he discussed these questions in public. He wished Italy to be free, but he feared the results of ineffective feeling. Italy, he held, must free herself, and her aid, if any, should be French, not English, for France heads the Latin League. In 1859 he rested on a mutual accord and disarmament between Great Britain and France. This would, he pleaded, be "a conquest far more valuable than Lombardy, or those wild dreams of a regeneration ever promised but never accomplished." "National independence," he urged in another speech on the same subject, "is not created by protocols, nor public liberty guaranteed by treaties. All such arrangements have been tried before, and the consequence has been a sickly and short-lived offspring. What is going on in Italy—never mind whose may have been the original fault, what the present errors—*can only be solved by the will, the energy, the sentiment, and the thought of the population themselves.*"

One word before I close this chapter about Greece and Poland. Of his own feeling for Hellas there can be no question. It pervades his works. "All the great things have been done by the little peoples." He was offered, I have heard, the kingship of that country. But Greek ambitions, he felt, outgrew her capacities. Her hereditary dream has always been Constantinople. He bade her, in a famous passage, take the advice that he would give to a youth of genius and enterprise: "*Be patient.*" But he also insisted that she should be heard at the Conference of Berlin.

With Poland's free aspirations he always sympathised, and more than once expressed the grounds of his sympathy in Parliament. The movement in Poland was one, natural, spontaneous, and national. It was not forced by agitators, nor fomented by despots, nor provoked elsewhere from ulterior motives. It was the genuine expression of a combined people, and not the plea of a single race overbearing its fellow components, or the pretence of a single locality to manage itself, both of which have so frequently proved the stalking-horse of "national rights;" pleas that, if sound, would bring back the Heptarchy in England, undo the union of Germany and of Italy, break up the faculty for government, and resolve into petty elements every great nation in Europe. Such an

article of "liberal" faith is neither more nor less than political atomism; and its humanitarian guise too often the false philanthropy of "sublime sentiments." In all his treatment of "Britain's interests abroad," Disraeli realised that whereas in England government can still be carried on by "traditionary influences," the remaining ancient communities of Europe were falling more and more under the veiled sway of "military force." These were the two alternatives. A "reconstruction" of England "on the great Transatlantic model" would only accentuate the discrepancy between the ineradicable features of her body politic, and the social standard which she would seek to imitate. The result would be that "after a due course of paroxysms for the sake of maintaining order and securing the rights of industry, the State quits the senate and takes refuge in the camp"—

"Let us not be deluded by forms of government. The word may be republic in France, constitutional monarchy in Prussia, absolute monarchy in Austria, but the King is the same. *Wherever there is a vast standing army the government is the government of the sword.* Half a million of armed men must either be, or be not, in a state of discipline. If not . . . it is not government but anarchy; if they be in a state of discipline, they must obey one man, and that man is the master."¹

I have tried to track a large subject deserving a longer space. At any rate, I hope to have justified Disraeli's own language in the touching letter which breathed farewell to his constituents when failing health compelled him to accept an earldom—

"Throughout my public life I have aimed at two chief results. Not insensible to the principle of progress, I have endeavoured to reconcile change with that respect for tradition which is one of the main elements of our social strength; and in external affairs I have endeavoured to develop and strengthen our empire, *believing that a combination of achievement and responsibility elevates the character and condition of a people.*"

It is not a little remarkable that this farewell re-echoes the

¹ *Life of Lord George Bentinck* (1852).

sentence quoted in my first chapter from his tract *What is he?* as well as that later Runnymede Letter which, forty years earlier, he addressed to Sir Robert Peel.¹

“ . . . Spread it then,
And let it circulate through every vein
Of all your empire ; that where Britain’s power
Is felt, mankind may feel her mercy too.”

¹ “ . . . The end of their system . . . is the glory of the empire and the prosperity of the people.”

CHAPTER VII

AMERICA—IRELAND

I HAVE associated these two heads of discussion because they have long been coupled in home politics, at times disastrously, but now, it may be hoped, under favouring auspices. On the lighter side of American society and its first invasions of England he also touched. I shall touch these in the next chapter, reserving this for the political aspects of the question. My first chapter has already mentioned the paragraph in his earliest pamphlet, dedicated to Canning.

Disraeli was always intensely interested in America, and watched her development with vigilance. He predicted her imperial future. He deprecated jealousy of her power, and, while England was incensed at her conduct in 1871, he alone maintained that it was due to the prejudices of a class and the objects of a party, not to the national sentiment. He descried in America's essential democracy, which adheres even to her republican forms, one wholly peculiar to herself—a democracy of the soil, of which the base and root is land, underlying the gigantic commerce and colossal finance which are merely the froth of her wealth ; and in such a democracy he perceived an element of stability lacking to every other known democratic country. Before her crucial conflict was determined, he prophesied, too, among the difficulties that must confront her, that of a vast number of emancipated negroes. When the great struggle arose between the energy of the North and the traditions of the South, Disraeli also, alone among the leaders of his party, discerned both the probabilities of the winning side and its aptitude for moderation and self-control. For this sagacity he received Mr. Bright's approbation in 1865. When

the civil war was in process, the gentry of England, naturally and generously sympathetic with the Southerners, had suspected that Canada might be threatened, and had wished something "to be done ;" Disraeli restrained and allayed them. Mr. Bright said : " With a thoughtfulness and statesmanship which you do not all acknowledge, he did not say a word from that bench likely to create a difficulty with the United States. I think his chief and his followers might learn something from his example." I quote this meed from an opponent, because Mr. Bryce, in his recent monograph, implies the contrary ; but then, Mr. Bryce sometimes trips, and has made the trifling mistake of naming " Lucian " as Disraeli's pet classic, whereas surely it was " Tacitus."

Disraeli's leading idea as to America was that, although she had long achieved independence, her original spirit had remained colonial, but that her civil war would transform the past colony into a coming empire. Speaking in 1863, he said—

" I am bound to say that from the first—and subsequent events have only confirmed my convictions—I have always looked upon the struggle in America in the light of a great revolution.¹ Great revolutions, whatever may be their alleged causes, are not likely to be commenced, or to be concluded, with precipitation. *Before the civil war commenced, the United States were colonies*, because we should not forget that such communities do not cease to be colonies because they are independent. *They were not only colonies, but colonising ;* and they existed under all the conditions of colonial life except that of mere political dependence. *But even before the civil war*, I think that all impartial observers must have been convinced that in that community *there were smouldering elements which indicated the possibility of a change, and perhaps of a violent change.* The immense increase of population ; the still greater increase of wealth ; the introduction of foreign races in large numbers as citizens, not brought up under the laws and customs which were adapted to a more limited, and

¹ Disraeli was always careful to distinguish between " revolution "—a permanent upheaval, and " insurrection "—a transitory outburst. Thus he expressly terms the continental movements of 1848, " insurrections."

practically a more homogeneous, race ; the character of the political constitution, consequent, perhaps, on these circumstances ; *the absence of any theatre for the ambitious and refined intellects of the country, which deteriorated public spirit and lowered public morality ;* and, above all, *the increasing influence of the United States upon the political fortunes of Europe ;*—these were all circumstances which indicated *the more than possibility that the mere colonial character of these communities might suddenly be violently subverted, and those imperial characteristics appear which seem to be the destiny of man.* I cannot conceal from myself the conviction that, whoever in this House may be young enough to live to witness the ultimate consequences of this civil war, will see, whenever the waters have subsided, a different America from that which was known to our fathers, and even from that of which this generation has had so much experience. *It will be an America of armies, of diplomacy, of rival states and manœuvring cabinets, of frequent turbulence, and probably of frequent wars.* With these views, I have myself, during the last session, exerted whatever influence I possessed in endeavouring to dissuade my friends from embarrassing her Majesty's Government in that position of politic and dignified reserve which they appeared to me to have taken upon this question. It did not appear to me, looking at these transactions across the Atlantic, *not as events of a mere casual character, but being such as might probably influence, as the great French Revolution influenced, and is still influencing, European affairs,* that there was on our part, due to the *existing authorities* in America, a large measure of deference in the difficulties which they had to encounter. At the same time, it was natural to feel . . . the greatest respect for those Southern States, who, representing a vast population of men, were struggling for some of the greatest objects of existence—independence and power. . . .”

Long before this—in 1856—he had said, when America's attitude towards Central American troubles was irritating England, that in his opinion “. . . it would be wise if England would at last recognise that the United States, like all the great countries of Europe, *had a policy, and a right to have a policy.* It was foolish for England to regard with

jealousy *any legitimate extension of the territory of the United States beyond the bounds originally fixed.*" Such a jealousy would not arrest or retard the development of America; but it might involve disasters. He instanced California and the gloomy forebodings at home with regard to it, none of which had been realised; and he impressed upon the House that "*It was the business of a statesman to recognise the necessity of an increase of power in the States.*" The same year evoked another speech which forecasts the tenour of that in 1863, and is a fresh witness of the continuity of his imaginative insight, and his wakeful constancy of his purpose. After deprecating jealousy of America's political and commercial progress, he thus proceeded—

"... I cannot forget that the United States, though independent, *are still in some sense colonies, and are influenced by colonial tendencies*; and when they come in contact with large portions of territory scarcely populated, or at the most sparsely occupied by an indolent and unintelligent race of men, *it is impossible—and you yourselves find it impossible—to resist the tendency to expansion; and expansion in that sense is not injurious to England*, for it contributes to the wealth of this country (let us say this in a whisper, lest it cross the Atlantic) more than it diminishes the power of the United States. In our foreign relations with the United States, therefore, I am opposed to that litigious spirit of jealousy which looks upon the expansion of that country and the advance of these young communities with an eye of jealousy and distrust."

What he realised and first proclaimed, was that America was ceasing to be a mongrel blend or a colonial people, and was fast becoming a national community, with a voice, a vigour, a tendency, and in every department a twang, so to say, of its own; that, moreover, this consolidation would tend towards empire, and that England must prepare for and reckon with it, especially as a partial crudeness and rudeness are to some extent inseparable from developments so sudden. It had not always been thus. Even long after the Puritan settlement, the primæval charm of an aboriginal race clung to its forests and prairies. The strain, the science of race,

fascinated Disraeli ; the unsubdued and the untameable ever appealed to him. Races could only be replaced by nations ; and the interval was always atomic and confused ; but it was also one of primitive dash and daring. As a youth, Disraeli, in *Contarini*, had dreamed of such a life. In *Venetia*¹ he had wondered whether the Atlantic would ever be so memorable as the Mediterranean ; whether pushfulness would ever attain refinement ; whether its provincialism might not be doomed to weakness. “. . . Its civilisation will be more rapid, but will it be . . . as permanent? . . . What America is deficient in is creative intelligence. *It has no nationality.* Its intelligence has been imported like its manufactured goods. *Its inhabitants are a people, but are they a nation?* I wish that the empire of the Incas and the kingdom of Montezuma had not been sacrificed. I wish that the republic of the Puritans had blended with the tribes of the Wilderness.”

Two dangers for England, however, emanated from America ; and perhaps they were connected. The one was American Anglophobia, the other Fenianism. The one might estrange our North American colonies ; the other was to imperil our national unity.

In 1865, Disraeli addressed himself to the former. The American war was not then decided. He was not of opinion that, when it ended, our connection with Canada would bring us into collision with America. He did not believe that if the North was vanquished, it would “feel inclined to enter immediately into another struggle with a power not inferior in determination and in resources to the Southern States of America ;” and he saw many rocks ahead to divert the advancing tide—

“I form that opinion because I believe that the people of the United States are eminently a sagacious people. I don't think they are insensible to the glory of great dominion and extended empire, and I give them equally credit for being influenced by passions which actuate mankind, and particularly nations which enjoy such freedom as they do. But . . . I do not think they would seize the moment of

¹ Though published in 1836, it was written considerably earlier.

exhaustion as being the most favourable for the prosecution of an enterprise which would require great resources and great exertions."

He then turned to the opinions which had been ventilated on American platforms and in certain American newspapers. He refused to judge the real American character and opinions by them. "I look upon them," he said, "as I should look upon those strange and fantastic drinks . . . which are such favourites on the other side of the Atlantic ; and I should as soon suppose this rowdy rhetoric was the expression of the real feelings of the American people, as that these potations formed the aliment and nutriment of their bodies." And he thus explained a point which I have already noticed : "There is another reason why this violent course will not be adopted. The democracy of America must not be confounded with the democracy of the Old World. *It is not formed by the scum of turbulent cities* : neither is it merely a section of an exhausted middle class, *which speculates in stocks and calls that progress. It is a territorial democracy.* Aristotle, who has taught us most of the wise things we know, never said a wiser one than this—that the cultivators of the soil are the least inclined to sedition and to violent courses. Now, being a territorial democracy, their character has been formed and influenced, in a manner, by the property with which they are connected, and by the pursuits they follow ; and a sense of responsibility arising from the reality of their possessions may much influence their future conduct." On the other hand, this great change would certainly alter the spirit of society, and perhaps of government." But he saw clearly the difficulties that still beset her. ". . . We must recollect that even if the Federal Government should be triumphant, it will have to deal with most perplexing questions and with a discontented population. . . . The slave population will then be no longer slaves. *There will be several millions of another race emancipated and invested with all the rights of freemen ; and, so far as the letter of the law is concerned, they will be upon an equality with the Saxon race, with whom they can possibly have no sympathy. . . . Nothing tends more to the discontent of a people than that they should be in possession*

of privileges and rights which practically are not recognised, and which they do not enjoy."

Such were the elements of disunion. To cope with them a strong government was requisite; and that meant a *centralising* government with a military force at its command to uphold unity and order. Our colonies, on the other hand, were free from such obstacles, and were themselves developing an "element of nationality." They would not be assailed. But none the less, we must reckon with the United States in "the balance of power." He would not say that a class in America regarded old Europe "with feelings of jealousy or vindictiveness," ". . . but it is undeniable that the United States look to old Europe with a *want of sympathy*. *They have no sympathy with a country that is created and sustained by tradition.*" We must, therefore, for the far future, foster and defend our colonies. If Canada had preferred absorption by America, ". . . we might terminate our connection with dignity, and without disaster." But if, as appeared, Canada and our North American colonies desired deeply and sincerely "to form a considerable state and develop its resources, and to preserve the patronage and aid of England, . . . then it would be the greatest political blunder that could be conceived, for us to renounce, relinquish, and avoid the responsibility of maintaining our interests in Canada."

American Anglophobia once more engaged his attention in 1871. The pith of his criticism may be summarised by the purport of that elegant metaphor, "Twisting the lion's tail." With regard to the *Alabama* claims, their "indirect" demands, and the disputes with our colonies, which once more provoked British feeling, Disraeli now complained that America's communications with England had been couched in arrogant terms, while those with Russia and Germany had been courteous. He declared that it was caused by rowdy rhetoric addressed to "irresponsible millions." ". . . The reason of this offensive conduct," he continued, "is this: there is a *party* in America, *who certainly do not monopolise the intelligence, education, and property of the country, and who, I believe, are not numerically the strongest, who attempt to obtain political power and excite political passion by abusing*

England and its Government, because they believe they can do so with impunity. . . . The danger is this. Habitually exciting the passions of millions, some unfortunate thing happens, or something unfortunate is said in either country ; the fire lights up, it is beyond their control, and the two nations are landed in a contest which they can no longer prevent. . . . Though I should look upon it as the darkest hour of my life, if I were to counsel, or even to support, a war with the United States, still, the United States should know that they are not an exception to the other countries of the world, that we do not permit ourselves to be insulted by any other country in the world, and that they cannot be an exception." Nevertheless, with regard to these very matters, he reiterated as late as 1872 : "Ever since I sat in this House, I have always endeavoured to maintain and cherish relations of cordiality and confidence between the United Kingdom and the United States. I have felt that between those two great countries the material interests were so vast, *were likely so greatly to increase*, and were in their character so mutually beneficial to both countries, that they alone formed bonds of union. . . . But I could not forget that, in the relations between the United States and England, *there was an element also of sentiment*, which ought never to be despised in politics, and without which there can be no enduring alliance. When the unhappy Civil War occurred, I endeavoured, therefore, so far as I could, to maintain . . . a strict neutrality between the Northern and the Southern states. . . . There were some at a particular time . . . who were anxious to obtain the recognition of the Southern states by this country. I never could share that opinion. . . . We were of opinion that, had that recognition occurred, it would not have averted the final catastrophe, . . . and it would, at the same time, have necessarily involved this country in a war with the Northern states, *while there were circumstances then existing in Europe which made us believe that the war might not have been limited to America.*"

I must now consider Fenianism. Every one now knows that Fenianism, at its inception in 1865, though its pretext was Ireland and its rallying centre America, was really an

international ruffianism for the disruption of the foundations of social order—was, in fact, an alliance of anarchists with soldiers of misfortune. Disraeli discerned this from the first. Plots and conspiracies of all kinds piqued at once his curiosity, his skill, and his fancy. I was told, more than thirty years ago, by an old gentleman who was a schoolfellow of Disraeli, that he remembered a boyish mutiny. Disraeli headed the conspiracy, and the head-master himself listened at the key-hole, spellbound by the eloquence that controlled it. He loved to unravel their machinations, to contrast their underground conclaves with their open appearance. Conspiracies abound in *Vivian Grey*, *Alroy*, *Iskander*, *Contarini Fleming*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*; these very secret societies, together with those of Jesuitry, pervade *Lothair*. “*Mirandola*” and “*Captain Bruges*” are drawn from life. When Fenianism raged in Ireland, Disraeli himself crossed the Channel and attended their meetings. He spoke about what he knew; and if secret societies were his hobby, he was yet undoubtedly right in ascribing most of the unforeseen abroad to their initiation.

Adverting, in 1872, to its fatal influence on Ireland, he remarked: “. . . The Civil War in America had just ceased, and a band of military adventurers, Poles, Italians, and many Irishmen, concocted at New York a conspiracy to invade Ireland, with the belief that the whole country would rise to welcome them. How that conspiracy was baffled . . . I need not now remind you. . . . You remember how the constituencies were appealed to, to vote against the Government who had made so unfit an appointment as that of Lord Mayo to the Viceroyalty of India. It was by his great qualities when Secretary for Ireland, by his vigilance, his courage, his patience, and his perseverance, that this conspiracy was defeated. He knew what was going on at New York, just as well as what was going on in the city of Dublin? . . .” And when, only a year before, the then Lord Hartington, at a moment of Fenian resurrection, withdrew his motion for a secret committee, Disraeli inveighed against an indecision that would be flashed in an hour across the Atlantic. This new movement of Fenianism brought America into dangerous

relations with England. And in many disguises and under mitigated forms, it half associated itself with the agitation for repeal, and the restless intrigues of the Papacy. Paid Nationalists and peasant priests were brought into connection with these Swiss guards of treason, ready to compass the destruction of property and authority in any country, and for any cause. It had been otherwise before its invention in America. When O'Connell—the great O'Connell as, despite everything, Disraeli publicly confessed when he died—supported Disraeli (who began as an “Independent”) at his first election in 1832, he did so on the common ground that both abominated the Whig system and desired the extension of reform. It was only afterwards, when O'Connell pronouncedly lent himself to what tended towards a repetition of “Captain Rock,” and became at once an agitator for dismemberment¹ and a pillar of the Whigs, that the young Disraeli denounced the fellowship of the dagger with the mitre, and incensed the degenerating patriot into insult. But the violence in Ireland of O'Connell's days was native. It sprang from, and it disgraced, the soil. Fenianism, however, added to the ancient terrors of a country distressed to madness and goaded into crime, the worst horrors of cosmopolitan conspiracies mated with every movement for the unsettlement of Europe; and for a while it tainted every breath of Irish nationalism, not only with detestation of England, but with enthusiasm for her enemies. The “Clan-na-gael” still fomented the last vestiges of genuine discontent; but the headquarters seem to have shifted from New York to a European capital. And yet so unconcerted and unprepared was Ireland herself, however equipped and compact were these mercenary foreigners, that Disraeli makes “Captain Bruges” exclaim in *Lothair*, after his rescue of the hero at the meeting, held under the sham banners of St. Joseph and harangued by a mock priest, “They manage their affairs in general wonderfully close, but I have no opinion of them. I have just

¹ Explaining, in 1835, his phrase that “the Whigs had grasped the bloody hand of O'Connell,” Disraeli said: “I mean that they had formed an alliance with one whose policy was hostile to the preservation of the country, who threatens us with a dismemberment of the empire, which cannot take place without a civil war.”

returned from Ireland, where I thought I would go and see what they really are after. No real business in them. Their treason is a fairy tale, and their sedition a child talking in its sleep."

And this brings me to Disraeli's ideas concerning the romantic, the persecuted, the generous, the witty, the pathetic Ireland.

No one who has studied his career can question his intense sympathy. Many of his earliest friends had been brilliant Irishmen and Irishwomen. He too sprang from a race once persecuted, still pathetic, always witty and romantic. Already, in 1843, Disraeli had exclaimed: "You must reorganise and reconstruct the Government, and even the social state of Ireland. . . . By really penetrating into the mystery of this great misgovernment" might be brought about "a state of society which would be advantageous both to England and Ireland, and which would put an end to a state of things that was the bane of England and opprobrium of Europe." But his ideas are conspicuously set forth in the great speech of 1844, which won the high praise of Macaulay, which Mr. Gladstone, some quarter of a century later, described as one of the "most closely woven tissues of argument and observation that had ever been heard in the House," and the reperusal of which he recommended as an intellectual "treat ;" though Disraeli himself then ironically observed that when he delivered it, nobody appeared to listen. "It seemed to me that I was pouring water upon sand, but it seems now that the water came from a golden goblet." He showed that, politically, Ireland was an open question. It was not the Tories who started the penal code. Mr. Pitt would have settled the question long ago had not the great war diverted his policy. Again, the grievances of Ireland were not due to Protestantism. They were owing to Puritanism—Puritanism in disloyal rebellion against which loyal Ireland rebelled. Ireland, he proved, was never so contented as in 1635. There was then perfect civil and religious equality. "At that period there was a Parliament in Dublin called by a Protestant king, presided over by a Protestant viceroy, and at that moment

there was a Protestant Established Church in Ireland ; yet the majority of the members of that Parliament were Roman Catholics. The government was at that time carried on by a council of state presided over by a Protestant deputy, yet many of the members of that council were Roman Catholics. The municipalities were then full of Roman Catholics. Several of the sheriffs also were Roman Catholics, and a very considerable number of magistrates were Roman Catholics. *It is, therefore, very evident that it is not the necessary consequence of English connection—of a Protestant monarchy, or even of a Protestant Church—that this embittered feeling at present exists ; nor that that system of exclusion, which either in form or spirit has so long existed, is the consequence of Protestantism.*"

It was not the Protestantism, not the connection, but the kind of Protestantism, the sort of connection, the exclusive and selfish spirit, that filled Ireland with ferment.

Hitherto Government had offered "a little thing in a great way."¹ "Justice to Ireland" had been long cried on the housetops. What was the meaning of that cry? It only signified a forced *identity* of English institutions with Irish. Identity, however, was just what Ireland resented with disgust.

What were her stumbling-blocks and stones of offence? What was "the Irish question"? "One says it is a physical question, another a spiritual. Now it is the absence of the aristocracy, now the absence of railroads. It is the Pope one day, potatoes the next. Let us consider Ireland as we should any other country similarly situated. . . . Then we shall see a teeming population, which, with reference to the cultivated soil, is denser to the square mile than that of China ; created solely by agriculture, with none of those sources of wealth which are developed with civilisation, and sustained, consequently, on the lowest conceivable diet ; so that, in case of failure, they have no other means of subsistence upon which they can fall back. That dense population in extreme distress

¹ Cf. the "passionate carelessness" in "the old state of affairs" of "the experimental chapter in our history" in the speech of March, 1869. On the "Maynooth Grant" question, also, he observed, in 1846, that the boons offered to the Roman Catholics were, that "two should sleep in a bed instead of three."

inhabit an island where there is an Established Church which is not their Church, and a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom live in distant capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church; *and, in addition, the weakest executive in the world.* That is the Irish question. What were the remedies?

"To begin with, and before anything else, you must have a representative, a responsive, a *strong* Executive. Ireland is an exceptional piece of the United Kingdom, and she alone demands what is foreign to the English spirit—*centralisation* of government. Next, the administration must be *impartial*. There must be no exclusion and no favouritism. You must also have *ecclesiastical equality*. The Church in Ireland must change the tone of its temper. And you must '*reconstruct* the social system' of Ireland. 'All great things are difficult;' but it is more difficult to reconstruct a society than a party. Agitation only unsettles: it does not settle; and it means the incompetence of a Government. You must 'create public opinion instead of following it; lead the public instead of always lagging after and watching others.'

". . . What, then, is the duty of an English minister? *To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would do by force.* . . . It is quite evident that, to effect this, we must have an Executive in Ireland which shall bear a *much nearer relation to the leading classes and characters* of the country than it does at present. There must be a much more *comprehensive* Executive, and then, having produced order, the rest is a question of time. There is no possible way by which the physical condition of the people can be improved by Act of Parliament."¹

So I read this pregnant deliverance. So, I believe, will read it any one who scans it closely in relation to its time and setting. In 1868, when there was capital to be made out of it, Mr. Gladstone did not so read it. Mr. Gladstone contended—and he had full right to contend—that, with regard

¹ Eight years before, Disraeli had written in the trenchant slap-dash of his *Runnymede Letters*: ". . . Then, Ireland must be tranquillised. So I think. Feed the poor and hang the agitators. That will do it. But that's not your way. It is the *destruction* of the English and Protestant interest that is the Whig specific for Irish tranquillity."

to the Church, at any rate, it spelled out "Destruction." Disraeli contented himself with retorting: "... There are many remarks which, if I wanted to vindicate . . . myself, I might legitimately make. . . . But I do not care to say it, and I do not wish to say it, because in my conscience the *sentiment of that speech was right*. . . ." My view is that it spelled out "Reconstruction." It would have settled Ireland and the Irish question by the principles of 1636 and on the lines of 1792, and not either by the Orange lodges of 1795, which answered Pitt's abortive schemes of improvement, or by the undemanded spoliation of 1868, which trebled the discontent it designed to allay. All Pitt's proposed measures were against *exclusion*. He tried to grant Ireland that free outlet for her manufactures to England which had proved her main source of discontent throughout the eighteenth century. He tried to include the Protestant Dissenters as well as the Roman Catholics in the avenues to political power. He was foiled by the selfishness and corruption of an Irish caste, and by the spread of the French Revolution to the Irish multitude. But in each case *inclusion* was his principle; development, not destruction. Disraeli followed him. It was his hatred of exclusiveness that prompted his aversion alike to the Whiggism of the Grenvilles and the Toryism of Eldon. It was his devotion to wide and popular as opposed to democratic and class principles that drew him to the Toryism of Bolingbroke and Wyndham, and enabled him to reconstruct the Tory party on its first but forgotten foundations.

But if we want a practical comment on the speech of 1844, we have it in an utterance of 1868. In 1868 he defined the position: "... I said the other night, as I say now, that I think you might elevate the *status* of the unendowed clergy in Ireland. . . . My opinion is, that if this system of conciliation, founded on the principle that in Ireland *you ought to create and not destroy*, had been pursued, you might have elevated the Irish Church greatly to its advantage. You might have rendered it infinitely more useful. . . . I do not think it impossible that you might have introduced measures which would have elevated the *status* of the unendowed clergy, and so softened and terminated those feelings of

inequality which now exist, *so that you might have had the same equality in the state of Ireland which you have in England.* There is perfect equality in the state of the Dissenter in England, although his is no established Church. That state of things might exist in Ireland, if you had taken measures which would, among a sensitive people, have prevented a sentiment of humiliation. . . . Without disestablishment, without the difficulties and dangers of concurrent endowment, there might have been a system of Government grants both to Romanists and Dissenters for education and other public objects. That is how I interpret the 'ecclesiastical equality' of 1844; 'to create and not to destroy.'"¹ And, speaking again of his desire to supplement the educational means for the Roman Catholics, he said: ". . . That is in accordance with our uniform policy, . . . a reconciliation between creeds and classes."

After 1844 the Irish question still festered. Nowhere did the repeal of the Corn Laws inflict more immediate distress than in a country so dependent on native agriculture as Ireland was then and still remains. Pauperism became the crying evil of Ireland. Even in 1869, more than a quarter of the inhabitants were paupers. Pauperism defied "political palliatives." The Government of Ireland, despite his warnings, remained a weak one, and, alluding to this in a famous speech of 1869, he pertinently brought into prominence the fact that what strength it has depends now on its connection with England. ". . . The Government of Ireland is not a strong one; its sanctions are less valid than those of the Government of England. It has not the historic basis which England rests upon. It has not the tradition which the English Government rests upon. It does not depend upon that vast accumulation of manners and customs which in England are really more powerful than laws or statutes." What Disraeli felt all along was that Ireland needed security for capital and variety of employment; and that for these repose and

¹ He was alluding to Lord Derby's earlier efforts. And again, in another speech: ". . . The principles of our policy were, first, to create and not destroy; and, secondly, to acknowledge that you could not in any more effectual way strengthen the Protestant interest than by doing justice to the Roman Catholics."

order were requisite. In November, 1868, alluding to the naturalisation of Fenianism in Ireland at a time when Ireland was inherently contented and immeasurably superior to her plight in 1844—when she had begun to rest and be thankful—he made the following comment:—

“ . . . In Ireland there was always a degree of morbid discontent which the Fenians believe they may fan into flame, and which might lead to the revolutionary result they desire. The whole nature of the race will account for it. An Irishman is an imaginative being. He lives in an island, in a damp climate and contiguous to the melancholy ocean. *He has no variety of pursuit.* There is no nation in the world that leads so monotonous a life as the Irish, because *their only occupation is the cultivation of the soil before them.* . . . The Irishman in other countries, *where he has a fair field for his talents in various occupations, is equal, if not superior, to most races.* . . . I may say with frankness that I think this is the fault of the Irish. If they led that kind of life which would invite the introduction of capital into the country, all this ability might be utilised ; and instead of those feelings which they acquire by brooding over the history of their country, a great part of which is merely traditionary, you would find men acquiring fortunes, and arriving at conclusions on politics entirely different from those which they now offer.”

The same outlook prompted him in another speech to regret the cry of a “conquered people” which the manipulators of grievance perpetually raised. Ireland was no more a conquered country than England. In both there had been conquerors and conquests ;¹ but in both a blend of races and institutions which had produced a nation in one, and made for nationality in the other.

Time went on. Ireland had improved by rest. There was even prosperity in her borders. Fenianism was subsiding.² Classes were less estranged. Emigration had

¹ He pointed out that England experienced both Norman and Dutch conquests ; and that if Cromwell conquered Ireland, he conquered England too.

² “ . . . Fenianism now is not rampant ; we think we have gauged its

increased, but the Liberals welcomed emigration. Disraeli had risen into supreme power, and had constitutionalised the democracy by his Bill of 1867. The Radicals were incensed at the measure, which they had coveted in another form and with sectional objects. The stiffer even of his own party stood aghast, and some seceded. The Liberals began to nibble at the Radical bait. It is a curious fact that the Whigs, when in political despair, usually resort to a revolutionary measure. Already, over thirty years before, they had done so in connection with Ireland. Suddenly, without warning, without a popular mandate, or even an Irish outcry for the upheaval, like a bolt from the blue came Mr. Gladstone's first great conversion from principles firmly protested only a year before.¹ The question was sprung on both countries. He brought in, and in a manner so imperious that a solid portion of his own followers deserted him, his Act for the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the Irish Church; not only for its severance from the State, but for its spoliation by the State.

In the abstract its disestablishment, apart from its disendowment, was a great, a just, and a generous measure; theoretically it was as sound as bimetallism. But its logical issues were incompatible with a united kingdom. They really, on examination, involved that separatist theory of the "right" of "nationalities" to be self-governing, of which he grew so fond. "Nationality" is here a wrong expression, for "nationality" is, by its essence, a term of union, and not of division. It should be "Locality." What is meant by this assumed "right" is, that particular races or particular provinces, absorbed into or dependent on "nationalities," are entitled, from the mere fact of their geographical limits, to withdraw from the greater whole of which they are portions. This theory would revive the Heptarchy. It would make Jersey and Guernsey, or the Isle of Man, it would make Scotland or Wales, a "nation."

lowest depths, and we are not afraid of it" (Speech, April 3, 1868). As regards coercion, he always maintained that proved sedition alone justified it.

¹ He wrote that the question of the Church in Ireland was one totally without the pale of modern politics. His programme also at the dissolution breathed not a word on the subject.

I say that Mr. Gladstone's measure, introduced when and how it was, and with its double purport, involved these conclusions, because if the mere existence of an "alien Church" justifies the severance of the ties between authority and religion, and the plunder of its revenues for purposes other than that for which they were created, then the same reasoning would not only justify the abolition of an alien and the substitution of a native government, but also a refusal to contribute any revenue to the deposed government at all. There might be occasions demanding such a course. An oppressive Church, a tyrannical government, might well be swept away by a statesman with ears to hear the cries of impatience and eyes to see the ravages of injustice—a true statesman who, as Disraeli said in 1844, would accomplish by statute and conciliation what revolutions necessitate by force.

But this was not one of them. The English Church itself was not practically resented, however its historical existence might be made to rankle in common with the other historical anomalies in Ireland, including its connection with England. The Church itself had been bettered, and might be still more improved. It was alive with opportunities. The Catholics and the Dissenters might, apart from the Establishment, which stood for British authority, be set upon a complete equality, and helped towards usefulness in many directions. The Church itself had proved a valuable educational centre. The Roman clergy called, not for its extinction, but for its disendowment; and rather because they could not bear to think that it was there at all, just as they cannot bear to think that it exists in England, than because they wanted the revenues or suffered under the rebuffs or rivalry of an English Church. It was an argument, as Disraeli put it, that might be paralleled if all those Irish gentlemen who had small estates, but frequented the same society, were to say that their brethren of large estates should surrender their revenues to the State; or if the unendowed hospitals of London were to exact the deprivation of the endowments enjoyed by St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, and Guy's, not with the object of themselves sharing them, but out of wanton envy.

Disraeli delivered three main speeches of great power,

interest, and length on this subject. I shall not quote them in words, but shall only endeavour to present their pith.

As regards the *Disestablishment*.

He objected to it on principle—the principles outlined in my second chapter. The union of Church and State is a symbol of the Divine nature of government, which is the only truth underlying the obsolete fiction of the “Divine Right of Kings.” He objected to it on policy. Divorce the religious principle from that of government, and it is the State that will suffer most. The result must be disorder. One day that might take a peculiar form. The political power once separated from the spiritual, a crisis might arise where the two might collide ; and where, though the political power might be right, the spiritual would appeal in haste to both passion and prejudice.

As regards the *Disendowment*.

He objected to it on principle. The plunder of public corporations was nothing new, but where the trust for which the corporation had been endowed was not observed in the application of the spoil by the State, which was a trustee, it was indefensible. It became confiscation. “Irish purposes” were vaguely hinted as the destination, but the repeal of the whisky duty might be an “Irish purpose ;” and where was the sense of dedicating some of this annexed property to Irish pauper lunatics ? Moreover, historically, he had always noticed that the spoil of the Church went eventually to enrich the large landed proprietors.

He objected to it on policy. One of the causes of discontent was alleged to be that a particular Church was not connected with the State. Mr. Gladstone proposed to regenerate the country by having *three* Churches not connected with the State. Discontent, however, would still remain smouldering, and Disraeli prophesied that its next phase would threaten the tenure of land. What would be the effect in this relation of having three Churches disconnected from the State ? The land question would, he predicted, assume many threatening forms with one purpose—a purpose against the rights and the duties of property. One Church was to be deprived of property which none of

the others claimed. Three sets of clergy were to be equally apart from the State. A class in the first place, therefore, and that a class of resident proprietors, was to be destroyed ; when it was agreed that one of the evils in Ireland was the want of a variety of classes and of resident proprietors. In the second, one of the avowed evils, the curse of Ireland, was poverty ; but here was an Act to confiscate property, and that property in its nature popular—the appanage of the people.

When the land question should arise, there might ensue a triple danger, that of three sets of clergy divided in theology and matters of discipline, but united in discontent ; and the three might eventually demand the restoration of the national property ; and if it were refused, there might be revolution. England could afford no more revolutions. But, in any case, the spoliation of the Protestant clergy would breed jealousies among themselves also ; for they were actually invited and induced (by means which he exposed) to co-operate in their own expropriation. The plunder of the Catholic clergy had bred great discontent. The plunder of the Protestant clergy would do the same. And if discontent were left to grow as it went, the land outcry would produce others, and they again others in their turn and train. There would be no rest, no finality. It would be discontent without end.

Far more than this, however, he objected to the ultimate consequences of this revolutionary departure. Confiscation was contagious. What was now applied—and applied in a form aggravated by its complications—to the national property, might one day be applied to private property. What was now applied to Ireland might one day be forcibly applied to England. If the public disaster of the disestablishment and disendowment of the English Church ever took place, in deference to the jealousy of a class and not because of its own inherent decay as a great civil and ecclesiastical institution, it would be aided by the precedent of Ireland.

Such is the pith, though many of the details and much of the historical criticism are omitted ; nor have I here dealt

with the Maynooth and "Regium Donum" problems and their bearings on these matters, which Disraeli discussed in full. But I have condensed enough to point the path of his ideas.

Not all these dismal forebodings have yet been realised ; but many of them, unfortunately, came to pass. Ireland's discontent, Catholic discontent, were, neither of them, allayed by the disestablishment and disendowment of the Protestant Church. The clergy of that Church are still far from contented. The land question burst out within a brief space of Disraeli's prediction. It brought with it a long and fatal series of cumulative troubles ; and, as Disraeli had also predicted, the actual rights of civil property, the rights of civilised society, became invaded. "Compensation for disturbance" asserted the right to pay no rent. For a time the last state of Ireland was almost worse than the first. There were "months of murder, incendiarism, and every conceivable outrage." "The Executive absolutely abandoned their functions." Disraeli's last trumpet-call was to warn the country, in his celebrated letter to the Lord-Lieutenant, that there were those who wished to sever Ireland from England as part of a scheme for the disruption of the Empire. In 1881 he adverted to that warning.

". . . Now what was the consequence of that declaration ? The present Government took an early opportunity soon after I had made that declaration, to express a contrary opinion. They said there was in Ireland an absence of crime and outrage, with a general sense of comfort and satisfaction. . . . I warned the constituencies that there was going on in Ireland a conspiracy which aimed at the disunion of the two countries, and probably at something more. I said that if they were not careful something might happen almost as bad as pestilence and famine. . . . My observations, of course, were treated with that ridicule which a successful election always secures. . . ."

We all know the rest. The country was only saved by a secession of the light and leading of the Liberal party from their rash and misguided leader. Wisdom has been justified of her child.

In conclusion, let me say that none would have welcomed more gratefully than Disraeli the statesmanlike effort to settle the land question which has recently made England the landlord of Ireland. He might have descried in it elements of difficulty, and even of some danger for the future. But it would, in the main, I am confident, have received his unstinted support; for it is founded on the rock of conciliation—on Disraeli's policy "*To create and not to destroy.*"

CHAPTER VIII

SOCIETY

MACAULAY observes of Frances Burney that "while still a girl she had laid up such a store of materials for fiction as few of those who mix much in the world are able to accumulate during a long life. She had watched and listened to people of every class, from princes and great officers of State, down to artists living in garrets and poets familiar with subterranean cook-shops. Hundreds of remarkable persons had passed in review before her—English, French, German, Italian, lords and fiddlers, deans of cathedrals and managers of theatres, travellers leading about newly caught savages, and singing women escorted by deputy husbands."

This is true of Disraeli. Long before he entered public life, before he knew the inimitable D'Orsay, or even the luminous Lyndhurst, before his most happy marriage, he had entered society at both doors—the gate of horn and the gate of ivory. As a stripling of twenty he had been sent, as we have seen, by Murray, the founder of his own fortune on Byron's fortune and misfortunes, to Abbotsford and Sir Walter Scott. The young Disraeli used to dub Murray "the Emperor." Murray described him as the most remarkable young man he had ever met; "a deep thinker but thoroughly practical in his ideas," at once brilliant and solid, of a bright and airy disposition which endeared him to the young, and, himself unspoilt as "a child;" singularly happy in his home relations, and "his father is my oldest friend." That father was himself a singular and remarkable man, who had attracted a distinguished coterie. He was Pye's early intimate and Thomas Baring's friend. His ties with Penn cemented his

love of Buckinghamshire. He was familiar with Southey, and he knew Mrs. Siddons. He conversed with Samuel Rogers¹ and Tom Moore; he had corresponded and dined with Byron, of whom "Disraeli the Younger" has recorded some striking traits. He knew all the men of quills and letters, including the antiquarian Bliss and Douce, many of the wits, and some of the "wit-woulds." His own brother-in-law, George Basevi, was an eminent architect,² and architecture is often touched in the son's novels.³ Another member of the family was a conveyancer, and through him the son was first sent to read law with a solicitor, in whose office he read Chaucer, and was then entered at Lincoln's Inn. He had artistic acquaintances also. Barry, he knew well. Downman painted his wife, and Downman's brother was his associate. And there were also some men of affairs who visited Isaac Disraeli's house. The burrowing and irrepressible Croker, afterwards so mercilessly satirised as "Rigby,"⁴ and equally trounced, poor man, by Thackeray and Macaulay, seems to have been his occasional purveyor of politics. But for contemporary parties he cared little. He was a solitary student of the past; excavating ancient manuscripts in the British Museum when the daily number of such scholars did not exceed six. He was shy, meditative, dreamy, and dispassionate. But he was poet besides recluse; his earliest courtship, while Dr. Johnson lay dying, had been that of the muse. Sir Walter Scott included one of his lyrics in a published collection.⁵ He diversified his stern by lighter labours, and

¹ Rogers is mentioned in the very young Disraeli's *Infernal Marriage*—"The Pleasures of Oblivion." The poet, apparently, is fond of his subject."

² He lost his life in restoring Ely Cathedral. He designed a portion of Belgrave Square. When Disraeli was at last returned to Parliament, he wrote to his sister, "So much for Uncle G. and his 'maddest of mad acts.'"

³ He mentions several less familiar among the ancients. For instance, John of Padua in *Endymion*.

⁴ In a letter of the late 'forties to his sister, he says with surprise that Croker (who disclaimed having read it) should have greeted him with effusion. In the same correspondence he repeats a *mot* that the two most disgusting things in life—because you cannot deny them—are Warrender's wealth, and Croker's talents.

⁵ When they met, Sir Walter treated him with cordiality; nevertheless, in one of his late letters he styles him "*un vieux crapaud*."

his novels, long since mouldered, caused some stir and attracted sympathy. After the romance of his early failures and the surprise of his early success, he set himself patiently down to work for ten years before he would print another line. His own father, who never understood but always humoured him, was a man of business, sanguine and prompt, yet gay and nonchalant, who lost fortunes and regained them.¹ Disraeli the Younger united the two strains of his father and of his grandfather. He was a practical dreamer.

Isaac Disraeli, then, gave his boy an opening to the literary world. Among his intimates was the shrewd solicitor, Mr. Austin, and his clever young wife, a literary coquette of talent, the aunt of the future Sir Henry Layard, the transcriber of *Vivian Grey*. Her salon was frequented, among others, by the Hooks² and the Mathews. With the Austins young Disraeli journeyed in Italy and Germany. From his father's library he thus emerged on a larger world. But he soon outstepped its bounds. After his long Eastern travels with Clay, and Meredith³ affianced to Disraeli's sister—a voyage on which Byron's Tita became Disraeli's valet, and on which he encountered the most opposite types as well as some curious adventures⁴—his own first books made him the lion of several seasons. He and Bulwer divided the honours of Bath, then still fashionable. Lyndhurst grew to depend on his assistance, and even advice; Disraeli escorted him when as Chancellor he was present at Kensington at the accession of Queen Victoria; Lyndhurst's daughter became an associate of Disraeli's sister; and nothing gave Disraeli more unfeigned pleasure than the visits of Lyndhurst and Bulwer to his father at Bradenham.

He not only wrote novels, pamphlets, and sonnets (his

¹ In 1761 he was even bankrupt. Cf. British Museum Add. MS. 36,191, f. 8.

² Theodore Hook is the original of "Lucian Gay" in *Coningsby*.

³ His acquaintance seems to have been made through "Platonist Taylor," who gave literary symposia.

⁴ In Spain he rescued a lady from robbers. On the Ægean he armed and drilled the crew against pirates. In Palestine, with difficulty and courage, he forced his way into the Mosque of Omar. In Egypt a pacha asked him to draft a constitution.

vain ambition was to revolutionise poetry), but he seems to have contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* as well as to many magazines. In 1833, as has been noticed, he corresponded with its editor, Napier, with a view to a "slasher" on Morier's "Zohrab," which had been puffed in the *Quarterly*. Of the book he remarks, "A production in every respect more contemptible I have seldom met with;" and of the puff, "This is what comes of putting a tenth-rate novelist at the head of a great critical journal."¹

Then followed Gore House, with its high Bohemian wits, its low Bohemian buffoons, its loose celebrities, its "man of destiny," Louis Napoleon; its laughter and its tears; its Watteau-like *parterres*, and the generous, erring Egeria of the grot.² Then, too, came that fascinating circle of the Sheridans, which united sparkling talent to entrancing beauty in extraordinary charm. But then also came the duller round of High Mayfair—the Londonderrys and the Buckinghams. Among diplomatists at this period he knew Pozzo. He had seen, or met, or known the fathers or grandfathers of most of the aristocracy which, forty years afterwards, he was to lead. Resolved from the first, as he said in an early letter, "to respect himself, the only way to make others respect you;" an outrageous dandy; sometimes in deplored debt, often in surmounted scrapes, always in good humour, he had surveyed the whole kaleidoscope of society, artificial as well as natural, before, or soon after, he turned thirty years of age; from the pachas and intriguers of the East, to the leaders and amusers of the West; from Ali and the governors, admirals, and garrisons of Malta and Gibraltar, to solemn busy-bodies in and out of place; the fops and flutterers in and out of society; men famous who were destined to obscurity, men obscure who were vowed to fame; eccentrics and platitudinarians; the Upper Ten—"the two thousand Brahmins who constitute the

¹ Cf. British Museum Add. MS. 34,616, f. 45. I have referred to this in Chapter I.

² "Sure you were to find yourself surrounded by celebrities, and men were welcomed there if they were clever, before they were famous, which showed it was a house that regarded intellect, and did not seek merely to gratify its vanity by being surrounded by the distinguished."
—*Coningsby*.

world"—and the lower ten thousand ; from the eccentric Urquhart to "L. E. L.," "the Sappho of Brompton," and, it would seem, Davison the future musical critic. An early letter, probably addressed to him, lies before me. It may be of passing interest to subjoin it :—

"MY DEAR DAVISON,

"I am very vexed that I missed you this morning. I arrived in town to-day, and am now living the *vie solitaire* in Bloomsbury. Will you come and ameliorate a bachelor's torments by partaking of his goblet ?

"I am alone, as Ossian says, but luckily not upon the hill of storms.

"Instead of that catch-cold situation, a good fireside will greet you.

"Mind you come.

"Yours ever,

"B. DISRAELI."

"Excuse scrawl, etc. 6 o'clock."

The society of those days still retained much of the Regency's tinsel. It glittered far more than it shone. Society was not then quite the Dresden china shop with porcelain figures of beaux and boxers, of toppers and bull-dogs, of satyrs and nymphs, of city swains and simpering shepherdesses, that it had been ten or fifteen years before. Byron, with his savage sincerity, may be said to have dashed that smooth farrago to fragments. But it remained a society of veneer and affectation. It was a less natural age than our own, with fewer ideals and less outward movement. It was a more boisterous age than our own ; public opinion exercised far less pressure. It was at once a coarser, a more sentimental and a more romantic, if a more bombastic age than ours. There still lingered the curiosity of Dr. Johnson's age for the tittle-tattle of voyagers and the curiosities of barbarism. But it was not in the main a more material age, or, under the surface, a much more selfish one. Sympathy was local then. "The people were only half born." It was, however, certainly a generation far more fastidious and exclusive ; and at the same time it was certainly more appreciative of genius. You

could then appeal to the few where you cannot now appeal to the many ; for the few then had neither the narrowness of the *bourgeoisie* nor the unlimited appetite of the million.

"The invention," smiles Disraeli so early as in his mock-classical squib, *The Infernal Marriage*, "by Jupiter of an aristocratic immortality, as a reward for a well-spent life on earth, appears to me to have been a very ingenious idea. It really is a reward very stimulative of good conduct before we shuffle off this mortal coil, and remarkably contrasts with the democracy of the damned. The Elysians, with a splendid climate, a teeming soil, and a nation made on purpose to wait upon them, of course enjoyed themselves very much. . . . The Elysians, indeed, being highly refined and gifted . . . were naturally a very liberal-minded race and very capable of appreciating every kind of excellence. If a gnome, or a sylph, therefore, in any way distinguished themselves, . . . ay! indeed, if the poor devils could do nothing better than write a poem or a novel, they were sure to be noticed by the Elysians, who always bowed to them as they passed by, and sometimes, indeed, even admitted them into their circles."

What Disraeli detested was what he termed, even in *Vivian Grey*, "*society on anti-social principles*." What he liked was a distinct and distinctive circle, interchanging its ideas—"free trade in conversation." In his social, as in his political outlook, he craved inclusiveness on the basis of excellence, and not either the restrictedness of a caste or the miscellany of a multitude. In this sense all society should be "aristocratic." And he always felt that, as a rule, it was precisely the middle-class element, contrasted either with those who inherited the finer perceptions of breeding or with those—the gallery—born with perceptive instincts—that is in the main deficient in these respects. ". . . The stock-brokers' ladies took off the quarto travels and the hot-pressed poetry. They were the patronesses of your patent ink and your wire-wove paper. That is all past. . . ." ¹ What he disrelished was the meaner sort of mediocrity, except when it was unassuming and useful.

"High breeding and a good heart," he demands in

¹ *Vivian Grey*.

Lothair for the "perfect host." "To throw over a host," he has also written, "is the most heinous of social crimes. It ought never to be pardoned. . . ." " . . . She, too," he says of the Duchess in *Coningsby*—who "was one of the delights of existence,"—"was distinguished by that perfect good breeding which is the result of nature and not of education ; for it may be found in a cottage and may be missed in a palace. 'Tis a genial regard for the feelings of others that springs from the absence of selfishness. . . . Nothing in the world could have induced her to appear bored when another was addressing or attempting to amuse her. She was not one of those vulgar fine ladies who meet you one day with a vacant stare, as if unconscious of your existence, and address you on another in a tone of impertinent familiarity." "This is a lesson for you fine ladies," says "Egremont" in *Sybil*, "who think you can govern the world by what you call your social influences ; asking people once or twice a year to an inconvenient crowd in your house ; now haughtily smirking, and now impertinently staring at them, and flattering yourselves all this time that to have the occasional privilege of entering your saloons, and the periodical experience of your insolent recognition, is to be a reward for great exertions, or, if necessary, an inducement to infamous tergiversation." And, indeed, the "Zenobia" of *Endymion*, who was Lady Jersey, did sometimes condescend to practise these shifts of political ambition.¹ But in high society with low standards, there were worse depths than the backstairs patronage of party recruits. "Never," as the fine sentence prefixed to *Sybil* recalls, "were so many gentlemen, and so little gentleness." The contemptuous materialism of "Monmouth House," the elegant indifference of "Lord Eskdale," around which revolve the satellites and parasites, social and political—the folks that made Selwyn exclaim when a great nobleman's golden dinner-service was

¹ He liked to descant on the fast-fading and now vanished political Salon. That of "Lady St. Julians," who "was not likely to forget her friends," will be recalled by perusers of *Sybil*. In a Glasgow speech—recently revived by an evening journal—he praised, with admiration, Lady Palmerston's, where diplomatists, at loggerheads with the minister, could meet him in the neutral zone of his gifted wife's catholic hospitality.

up to auction—"Lord, how many toads have eaten off this plate!"

"Among the habitual dwellers" (this from *Coningsby*) "in these delicate halls there was a tacit understanding, a prevalent doctrine, that required no formal exposition, no proofs and illustrations, no comment, and no gloss, which was, indeed, rather a traditional conviction than an impartial dogma—that the exoteric public were, on many subjects, the victims of very vulgar prejudice, which these enlightened personages wished neither to disturb nor to adopt." "Society," he said, alluding to its treatment of Byron in *Venetia*, "is all passions and no heart." In *Vivian Grey* (as to the circumstances of which I shall say something in my last chapter) the father (that is, Disraeli's father) thus admonishes the boyish son.

". . . You are now inspecting one of the worst portions of society in what is called the great world (St. Giles' is bad, but of another kind), and it may be useful, on the principle that the actual sight of brutal ebriety was supposed to have inspired youth with the virtue of temperance. . . . Let me warn you not to fall into the usual error of youth, in fancying that the circle you move in is precisely the world itself. Do not imagine that there are not other beings, whose benevolent principle is governed by finer sympathies, and by those nobler emotions which really constitute all our public and private virtues. I give you this hint, lest, in your present society, you might suppose these virtues were merely historical." Speaking of "*Vivian Grey*" under the guise of "*Contarini Fleming's*" first novel, Disraeli makes his hero ejaculate: "All the bitterness of my heart, occasioned by my wretched existence among their false circles, found its full vent. Never was anything so imprudent. Everybody figured, and all parties and opinions alike suffered." Still more did he despise "the insolence of the insignificant."

What he admired in whatever form—even when incompatible with society—was purpose with personality. This is manifest in all his early novels, conspicuous in his later ones. The two heroes of *Venetia*—Byron and Shelley¹—are portrayed

¹ "Great as might have been the original errors of Herbert . . . they might, in the first instance, be traced rather to a perverted view of society than of himself."

from this point of view. Even the hysterical purpose of Lady Caroline Lamb in the person of "Lady Monteagle" is recognised; and of Byron he causes his characters to speak in *Vivian Grey*: "There was the man! And that such a man should be lost to us at the very moment that he had begun to discover why it had pleased the Omnipotent to have endowed him with such powers!"—"If one thing were more characteristic of Byron's mind than another, it was his strong, shrewd common sense, his pure, unadulterated sagacity."—"The loss of Byron can never be retrieved. He was indeed a real man; and, when I say this, I award him the most splendid character which human nature need aspire to."¹ The very intellectual purpose of comparative purposelessness, of dilettante taste, attracted him. This is how he addresses "Luttrell" in *The Young Duke*: ". . . Teach us that wealth is not elegance, that profusion is not magnificence, and that splendour is not heart. Teach us that taste is a talisman which can do greater wonders than the millions of the loan-monger. Teach us that to vie is not to rival; and to imitate not to invent. Teach us that pretension is a bore. Teach us that wit is excessively good-natured, and, like champagne, not only sparkles, but is sweet."² Teach us the vulgarity of malignity. Teach us that envy spoils our complexions, and that anxiety destroys our figure. Catch the fleeting colours of that sly chameleon, Cant, and show what excessive trouble we are ever taking to make ourselves miserable and silly. Teach us all this, and Aglaia shall stop a crow in its course, and present you with a pen, Thalia hold the golden fluid in a Sévres vase, and Euphrosyne support the violet-coloured scroll."

So, too, the energetic personality of D'Orsay aroused his enthusiastic friendship, and drew from him, some twenty years after that ambrosial figure had vanished, the tribute of ". . . the most accomplished and the most engaging character that has figured in this century, who, with the form and

¹ Byron also figures in *Ixion*. "All is mystery, and all is gloom, and ever and anon, from out the clouds a star breaks forth and glitters, and that star is Poetry."

² This recalls us to the 'thirties. In a letter to his sister he mentions the wineglass shape as a new receptacle for champagne.

universal genius of an Alcibiades, combined a brilliant wit and a heart of quick affection, and who, placed in a public position, would have displayed a courage, a judgment, and a commanding intelligence which would have ranked him among the leaders of mankind." D'Orsay speaks and acts to the life as "Count Mirabel" in *The Young Duke*. And, in a too unfamiliar passage of *The Young Duke*, he thus also embalms, I fancy,¹ the memory of Lady Blessington's maligned charm under the veil of "Lady Aphrodite."

"... We are not of those who set themselves against the verdict of society, or ever omit to expedite, by a gentle kick, a falling friend. And yet, when we just remember beauty is beauty, and grace is grace, and kindness is kindness, although the beautiful, the graceful, and the amiable do get in a scrape, we don't know how it is, we confess it is a weakness, but, under these circumstances, we do not feel quite inclined to sneer. But this is wrong. We should not pity or pardon those who have yielded to great temptation, or, perchance, great provocation. Besides, it is right that our sympathies should be kept for the injured." Endeavour and individuality he revered and recognised. Tact, the charity of manners, he admired.² But for aimlessness, whether callous or random, whether patrician or plebeian—whether of "Lord Marney," who said to "Egremont," "I am your elder brother, sir, whose relationship to you is your only claim to the consideration of society," and was answered, "A curse on the society that has fashioned such claims . . . founded on selfishness, cruelty, and fraud, and leading to demoralisation, misery, and crime;" or of "Rigby," who called his record in Debrett of the marriage successfully schemed for his patron, "a great fact." To such as these he gave no quarter; and he scalped them with a wit and an irony that has rarely been equalled.

¹ It may, however, refer to a certain Lady Sykes.

² There is another similar passage so early as in *Poapanilla*, which says that "... there were those who paradoxically held all this Elysian morality was one of great delusion, and that this scrupulous anxiety about the conduct of others arose from a principle, not of *Purity*, but *Corruption*. The woman who is "talked about," these sages would affirm, is generally virtuous. . . ." But the allusion may here be to Queen Caroline.

And he loved startling contrasts. "Whatever they did," he says in *The Infernal Marriage*, "the Elsyians were careful never to be vehement." Disraeli liked to break the monotone of society's polished surface by pronounced and original types of race, of class, of passion, of enterprise; the Roman among the European-Americans, the Arabian, the Syrian, the Greek, the Gaul among the Franks. He revelled in romantic women, muses, or prophetesses, who lead forlorn movements, or rally broken fortunes; in men whom they cheer and kindle; in public spirits; in sudden and unexpected revolutions of fortune, and sudden and unforeseen revelations of character. To himself in his first youth might adhere the phrase with which he then labelled "Popanilla:" "He looked the most dandified of savages, and the most savage of dandies." He liked to pit the Bohemian against the noble, and the valet against the hero; the "light children of dance and song" against their heavy patrons; to display the power of career even in the lodginghouse-keeper's daughter; to depict the aristocracy of the master working man; to analyse and contrast the ironies of the struggle, the social tragedy of illusion, and the social farce of fashion. ". . . 'Your mind is opening, Ixion,'" says Mercury, in that brilliant skit which Disraeli penned before he was celebrated; "'you will soon be a man of the world. To the left, and keep clear of that star'—'Who lives there?'—'The Fates know, not I. Some low people who are trying to shine into notice. 'Tis a parvenu planet, and only sprung up into space within this century. We don't visit them.'" "Sybil" herself, it should be remembered, is an aristocrat born, but not bred, while half "Egremont's" Norman relations are cads or snobs.

He loved, too, society's foibles—to hit off the precocious wisecracks of the golden youth. ". . . A young fellow of two-or three-and-twenty knows the world as men used to do after as many years of scrapes. I wonder whether there is such a thing as a greenhorn? Effie Crabbs says the reason he gives up his house is that he has cleaned out the old generation, and that the new generation would clean him."¹ To banter "those uncommonly able men who only want an opportunity," the

¹ *Coningsby*.

philosophers and the puppies ; to jest, as he does in *Popanilla*, at legal fictions ; to poke fun at the "great orator, before a green table, beating a red box," or the prattlers on science in "gilded saloons ;" to depict the pyramidal selfishness but unruffled pride of Lord Hertford in "Lord Monmouth"—Thackeray's "Lord Steyne;" to chronicle the pæan of "Mrs. Guy Flouncey"—a precursor of "Becky Sharp"—when she wins the invitation to the great house : "My dear, we have done it at last !" or those whose *summum bonum* is to have ten thousand a year and be thought to have five ; or those waiters on dying Mammon, who, when the will is read, "all become orderly and broken-hearted ;" or the bored good humour of the Radical noble, who was almost a Communist except as regarded land—"as if a fellow could have too much land ;" to burlesque the whole medley of blue bores and bore-blues, of red-tape, and peas-on-drums, the Jacks-in-office and the Jacks-in-boxes, of "nobs and snobs," of "statesmen, fiddlers, and buffoons." But it should not be forgotten that he ever kept a warm place in his heart for sailors, whom he regarded as among the most natural and delightful of mankind.¹

It was not only the big shams and little follies of society that revolted or amused him. He held, also, that melancholy and dulness were social crimes. "If a man be gloomy, let him keep to himself. No man has a right to go croaking about society, or, what is worse, looking as if he stifled grief. These fellows should be put in the pound. We like a good broken heart or so now and then ; but then one should retire to the Sierra Morena mountains and live upon locusts and wild honey, not dine out with our cracked cores. . . ."² And among breaches of social tact, he most disliked those minor monomanias which make the bore. "Never," he once warned a young man, "discuss 'The Letters of Junius,' or 'The Man in the Iron Mask.'" Some of his happiest conversations are to be found in the *Lothair* colloquies at Muriel Towers.

Society used to depend on conversation much more than it does now, when there is so much hurry, so much wealth, so many amusements, so little privacy, and so much printed

¹ *Venetia ; The Young Duke.*

² *Ibid.*

about it that practically there is no compact society at all—merely a touring menagerie. Disraeli, in one of his earlier novels,¹ has an excellent essay in miniature on social conversation :—

“The high style of conversation where eloquence and philosophy emulate each other, . . . all this has ceased. It ceased in this country with Johnson and Burke, and it requires a Johnson and a Burke for its maintenance. There is no mediocrity in such intercourse, no intermediate character between the sage and the bore. The second style, where men, not things, are the staple, but where wit and refinement and sensibility invest even personal details with intellectual interest, does flourish at present, as it always must in a highly civilised society. . . . Then comes your conversation man, who, we confess, is our aversion. His talk is a thing apart, got up before he enters the company from whose conduct it should grow out. He sits in the middle of a large table, and, with a brazen voice, bawls out his anecdotes about Sir Thomas or Sir Humphry, Lord Blank or Lady Blue. He is incessant, yet not interesting; ever varying, yet always monotonous. Even if we are amused, we are no more grateful for the entertainment than we are to the lamp over the table for the light which it universally sheds, and to yield which it was obtained on purpose. *We are more gratified by the slight conversation of one who is often silent, but who speaks from his momentary feelings, than by all this hullabaloo.* Yet this machine is generally a favourite piece of furniture with the hostess. You may catch her eye, as he recounts some adventure of the morning, which proves that he not only belongs to every club, but goes to them, light up with approbation; and then when the ladies withdraw, and the female senate deliver their criticism on the late actors, she will observe with a gratified smile to her *confidante*, that the dinner went off well, and that Mr. Bellow was very strong to-day. All this is horrid, and the whole affair is a delusion. A variety of people are brought together, who all come as late as possible, and retire as soon, merely to show that they have other engagements. A dinner is prepared for them,

¹ *Ibid.*

which is hurried over, in order that a certain number of dishes should be—not tasted, but seen. And provided that there is no moment that an absolute silence reigns ; that, besides the bustling of the servants, the clattering of the plates and knives, a stray anecdote is told, which, if good, has been heard before, and which, if new, is generally flat ; provided a certain number of certain names of people of consideration are introduced, by which some stranger, for whom the party is often secretly given, may learn the scale of civilisation of which he this moment forms a part ; provided the senators do not steal out too soon to the House, and their wives to another party—the hostess is congratulated on the success of her entertainment.” He much preferred the conversation of “Pinto,” whose raillery, unremembered, amused and “flattered the self-love of those whom it seemed sportively not to spare. . . . He was not an intellectual Croesus, but his pockets were full of sixpences.” But then, “Pinto” did not quite belong to the lower social stratum above characterised. That Disraeli had not altered his opinion of it after forty years’ immense and intimate experience is shown by the description in *Lothair* of the “reception” of “Mrs. Putney Giles.” Not that Disraeli by any means inclined to the “call-a-spade-a-spade” view of conversation. To say all one thought, to be rudely frank, would destroy social converse. “. . . As Pinto says, if every man were straightforward in his opinions, there would be no conversation. The fun of talk is to find out what a man really thinks, and then contrast it with the enormous lies he has been telling all dinner, and perhaps all his life.” “Never argue,” he once wrote, “and, if controversy arises, change the subject.” And he also recognised that “talk to man about himself, and he will listen for hours.” “All women are vain, some men are not.” He believed, too, in the saying of Swift, that a community of ailments is a fastener of friendship. Once when an intimate asked Lord Beaconsfield what he did when his acquaintanceship was claimed by many whose faces and names were unfamiliar, but who professed to have known him in youth, he answered, “I always say one thing—‘Quite so, quite so! *and how is the old complaint?*’”

I have said that in his youth Disraeli had occasionally been in debt.¹ No one ever reprobated it more, though no one, except Goldsmith and Sheridan, has also extracted more humour out of it, as is attested by the episode of "Mr. Levison" and the coals in *Henrietta Temple*.² In this novel he thus moralises—

"If youth but knew the fatal misery that they are entailing on themselves the moment they accept a pecuniary credit to which they are not entitled, how they would start in their career! how pale they would turn! how they would tremble, and clasp their hands in agony at the precipice on which they are disporting. Debt is the prolific mother of folly and of crime; it taints the course of life in all its dreams. Hence so many unhappy marriages, so many prostituted pens and venal politicians. It hath a small beginning, but a giant's growth and strength. When we make the monster we make our master, who haunts us at all hours, and shakes his whip of scorpions forever in our sight. The slave hath no overseer so severe. Faustus, when he signed the bond with blood, did not secure a dream more terrific. But when we are young we must enjoy ourselves. True; and there are few things more gloomy than the recollection of a youth that has not been enjoyed. . . ."

He was never a gambler. One of the most striking passages of *Vivian Grey* gives the story—which would make a strong play—of a man in high place, led on by even noble motives to game, until he sharpened at play, and was rescued

¹ The brilliant Mr. T. P. O'Connor, in the first edition of a "Biography" (which, perhaps, now he regrets), troubled himself to search out and enumerate the writs out against Disraeli in the early 'thirties. Most of his debts were for elections and "backing" his friends' bills. From friends he never borrowed; always from "Levison's." *Vivian Grey* was originally written to defray a debt.

² Levison offers the required advance, £700 in cash, £800 in coals. The captain expostulates, and is answered: "Lord! my dear Captin, £800 worth of coals is a mere nothink. With your connection you will get rid of them in a morning. All you have got to do . . . is to give your friends an order on us, and we will let you have cash at a little discount. . . . Three or four friends would do the thing. . . . Why, 'tayn't four hundred chaldron, Captin. . . . Baron Squash takes ten thousand of us every year; but he has such a knack; *he gits the clubs to take them.*"

from disgrace by friendship ; and in *The Young Duke* is the thrilling romance of the career of the founder of Crockford's.

The Macaronis were replaced by the Beaux ; the Beaux in their turn by the more florid Dandies ; until, at last, in the 'seventies, appeared the "Swells," the heavy, if grand, Blunderbores, sworn to bachelor indulgence, who thought that "every woman should marry, but no man," the exception only being if a girl sprang from "an affectionate family, with good shooting and first-rate claret." Disraeli was interested in the "swells." In a measure he had created them, because he had reconciled the people to the nobles, and the "swell" was a term embodying the people's homage. But in this phase Disraeli saw something comic and barbaric. "St. Aldegonde," himself a gigantic "swell," could not bear the "swells." When he met them he described them as "a social jungle in which there was a great herd of animals."

And with the "swells" began something of that "free-and-easiness" which hails from modern Columbia, and has now leavened society with its licence and its slang. "Free-and-easiness is all very well," once laughed Disraeli to a friend, "but why not be a little freer and a little less easy?" "His spirit," he says of "Coningsby," "recoiled from that gross familiarity that is the characteristic of modern manners, and which would destroy all forms and ceremonies, merely because they curb and control their own coarse convenience and ill-disguised selfishness." With the "swells" came also another social change—the diffusion not only of wealth, but of taste. A great lady assures "Lothair" that he will be surprised to see so many well-dressed and good-looking people at the opera, that he never beheld before.

Political society pervades all Disraeli's novels. Only two phases of it need here be mentioned. The tiny coteries who dine together twice a week and "think themselves a party." They appear in *Sybil* ; they reappear in *Endymion*. And the breakfast gatherings of the 'forties, peculiar, as Disraeli noted, to Liberals. "It shows a restless, revolutionary mind," mocks "Lady Firebrace," "that can settle to nothing, but must be running after gossip the moment they are awake." But two sayings, not directly with regard to society, may in this connection,

however, be recorded. Both are from *The Young Duke*. ". . . He was always offended and always offending. Such a man could never succeed as a politician—a character who, of all others, must learn to endure, to forget, and to forgive." The second was prophetic: "One thing is clear—that a man may speak very well in the House of Commons and fail very completely in the House of Lords. There are two distinct styles requisite. I intend in the course of my career, if I have time, to give a specimen of both. In the Lower House, 'Don Juan' may perhaps be our model; in the Upper House, 'Paradise Lost.'"

As for club existence, the "lounging, languid men" who spend their time in crossing from Brooks's to Boodle's and from Boodle's to Brooks's," has he not characterised "those middle-aged nameless gentlemen of easy circumstances, who haunt clubs and dine a great deal at each others' houses and chambers; men who travel regularly a little, and gossip regularly a great deal; who lead a sort of facile, slipshod existence, doing nothing, yet mightily interested in what others do; *great critics of little things* . . . peering through the window of a club-house as if they were discovering a planet"? And as for civic hospitality, he sums it up best, perhaps, in the *Endymion* epigram: "Turtle makes all men equal."

He felt all along that, after all, true society is at home, and not with "polished ruffians;" the "courtesy of the heart" was preferable to that "of the head." "My idea of perfect society," says "Lothair," "is being married, as I propose, and paying visits to Brentham;" or, as Disraeli varies the theme in the same novel, "I am fond of society that pleases me, that is accomplished and natural and ingenious; otherwise I prefer being alone." Home, he thought, should be the centre of society, and a homeless society was not one at all. It is very noticeable, in comparing present with past fiction, how the English sense of home and flicker of the fireside, which used to warm every page, has receded out of view before the motor-speed and nervous restlessness of the age. His home-fondness was touchingly displayed after the death of his wife by his reply to a friend, who asked if he

were driving home—a reply accompanied by tears ; “ Home ! I have no home *now*.” Nor did any great man ever reserve the sanctities of the hearth more completely from a prying public. The purity of his home affections was one of Mr. Gladstone’s notes of eulogy in the funeral oration that he delivered in the House to which Disraeli had been proudly devoted for forty-five long years. There are scores of sayings and episodes in his books, from *Vivian Grey* downwards, regarding the home affections ; many charming touches, too, in his letters to his sister. But I content myself with one, from *Venetia*—

“ . . . After all, we have no friends that we can depend upon in this life but our parents. . . . All other intimacies, however ardent, are liable to cool ; all other confidence, however limited, to be violated. In the phantasmagoria of life, the friend with whom we have cultivated mutual trust for years is often suddenly or gradually estranged from us, or becomes, from painful yet irresistible circumstances, even our deadliest foe. As for women . . . the mistresses of our hearts, who has not learnt that the links of passion are fragile as they are glittering ? . . . Where is the enamoured face that smiled upon our early love, and was to shed tears over our grave ? . . . No wonder we grow callous, for how few have the opportunity of returning to the hearth which they quitted in levity or thoughtless weariness, yet which alone is faithful to them ; whose sweet affections require not the stimulus of prosperity or fame, the lure of accomplishments or the tribute of flattery, but which are constant to us in distress, and console us even in disgrace ! ”

I ought, perhaps, to add a word of Disraeli’s ideas on love and marriage. No one set more store by, or laid more store on, the deciding influence of woman on man’s career. No one recognised more heartily a woman’s instinctive superiority to logic. How good is the humour in that dressing-room scene of the ‘seventies in *Lothair* :—

“ . . . The gentlemen of the smoking-room have it not all their own way quite as much as they think. If, indeed, a new school of Athens were to be pictured, the sages and the students might be represented in exquisite dressing-gowns,

with slippers rarer than the lost one of Cinderella, and brandishing beautiful brushes over tresses still more fair. Then is the time when characters are never more finely drawn, or difficult social questions more accurately solved; knowledge without reasoning, and truth without logic—the triumph of intuition! But we must not profane the mysteries of Bona Dea.”

To women, moreover, he, like “Coningsby,” “instinctively bowed as to beings set apart for reverence and delicate treatment,” but disillusioned chequered his experience. In maturity he could undoubtedly “conceive that there were any other women in the world than fair Geraldines and Countesses of Pembroke.” While Lord Randolph Churchill was still alive, a young man—now an eminent Liberal statesman, and then in the thick of a passionate courtship—poured out his heart to him as they walked home together from the House. Lord Randolph reminded him of what Disraeli had once observed to himself, that two of the great elements in life were passion and power; that in youth the first prevailed, but that, as years proceeded, the last proved incomparable. He once said in his early youth that most of the distinguished men of his acquaintance who had married “for love” bullied or maltreated their wives; and he also remarked at an early period that the man who wishes to rule mankind must not marry a too beautiful wife, who would divide his time and his will. Long afterwards, in the devotion of his home, Mrs. Disraeli would rally him by saying, “You know you married me for money, and I know that now, if you had to do it again, you would marry me for love.” It will be recalled, too, that “Sidonia,” though he had a heart, indulged his deeper emotions more towards causes than individuals. “In his organisation there was a peculiarity, perhaps a great deficiency.” And yet Disraeli wrote: “We know not how it is, but love at first sight is a subject of constant ridicule, but somehow we suspect that it has more to do with the affairs of this world than the world is willing to own.”—“Where we do not respect, we soon cease to love; when we cease to love, virtue weeps and flies.” I think that real love as the base of marriage is more genuinely, as well as romantically, portrayed in *Venetia* than in any of his works. In those pages it really moves us instead of moving

before us, as it often does, even in the "love story" of *Henrietta Temple*. One of his early hobbies, too, was that men ought to marry early, as a source of strength and simplicity both to the affections and to the race. This is emphasised in *Contarini Fleming*. The passage is striking, and illustrates his deeper ideas on the whole subject: "To a man who is in love the thought of another woman is uninteresting, if not repulsive. Constancy is human nature. Instead of love being the occasion of all the misery of this world, as is sung by fantastic bards, *I believe that the misery of this world is occasioned by there not being love enough.* . . . Happiness is only to be found in a recurrence to the principles of human nature, and these will prompt very simple manners. For myself, I believe that permanent unions of the sexes should be early encouraged; nor do I conceive that general happiness can ever flourish but in societies where it is the custom for all males to marry at eighteen. This custom, I am informed, is not unusual in the United States of America, and its consequence is a simplicity of manners and purity of conduct *which Europeans cannot comprehend, but to which they must ultimately have recourse.* Primeval barbarism and extreme civilisation must arrive at the same results. Men under these circumstances are actuated by their structure; in the first instance instinctively, in the second philosophically. At present¹ we are all in the various gradations of the intermediate state of corruption."

At all events, his own compositions were conspicuously spotless; and it may be said of him, as it was of Addison—so unlike otherwise—"No whiter page remains."

Such, then, are some of Disraeli's main ideas on the outward forms and inward spirit of society. Fashionable "society" he played with, and he used—it amused him; but he never cherished, rather he scorned it. Power he valued; and fame—"the opinion of mankind after death"—for him meant power. There was once a certain rather fussy Radical member who had long been anxious to make his acquaintance. When *Lothair* appeared, he rushed up to Disraeli excitedly, with many apologies for the intrusion, and begged him to

¹ It was written 1830-31.

receive the assurance of his daughter's intense admiration for that work. "Thank you ever so much," returned Disraeli, "*and this is fame!*"

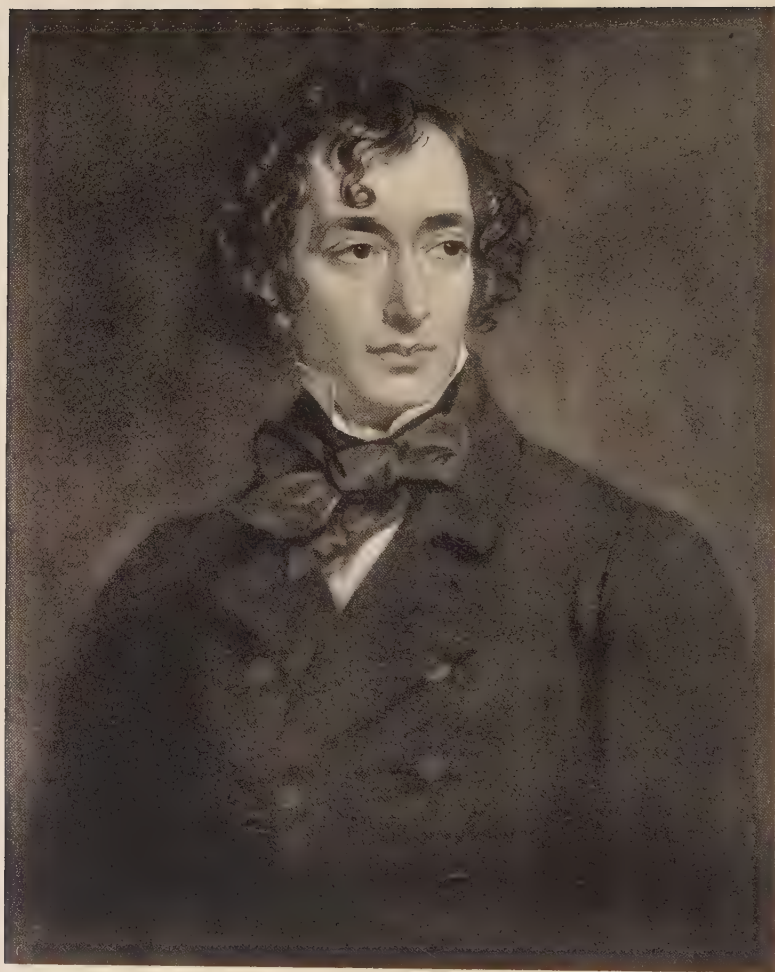
When the gorgeous trinket was in his grasp, and he was at the zenith of his eminence, I have already recorded an impressive instance. I may contrast with this another picture, also of a fact already chronicled in the interesting recollections of a young associate of his old age. It will bear repetition. The scene was Hughenden in late autumn, the time, after Lady Beaconsfield's death. He sat in reverie before the fire, watching the flickering embers. "Dreams, dreams, dreams," he murmured, as the wreaths of smoke and the sparks of flame went upwards. He was thinking of his favourite Sheridans, by whose own fireside, and basking in whose sunshine of wit and beauty, so many of his happiest evenings had been spent forty years ago. And perhaps, also, he was thinking of that charming daughter of Lord Lyndhurst, whose pet name tallied with his own sister's; and possibly, too, of that little Frances Braham, whom he had known in girlhood, and whom, after she, too, had carved a career, he still knew and admired as Frances, Lady Waldegrave.

Yet one more dissolving view—

The scene shifts again to London and a Foreign Office reception, with its gaping throng. It was the last function that Lady Beaconsfield, frail with age and bent with rheumatism, was able to attend. Step by step, all the way down that long staircase, he himself planted her feet and tenderly supported her feeble frame, till, when she reached the end, he presented to her a youth of promise, since a member of ministries, who will still remember it.

Yes, it was companionship, not "society," that was precious to him. And trial proves friendship.

"'Since I last met you, I heard you had seen much and suffered much.'—'And that makes the kind thoughts of friends more precious.'—'You have, however, a great many things which ought to make you happy.'—'I do not deserve to be happy, for I have made so many mistakes. . . .'—'Take a brighter and a nobler view of your life. . . . Feel rather that you have been tried and not found wanting.'"



DISRAELI IN 1852

After a painting by Sir Francis Grant, P.R.A.

CHAPTER IX

LITERATURE

WIT, HUMOUR, ROMANCE

WHATEVER Disraeli wrote was always literature, and never lecture. He was a born man of letters, and Dickens once lamented that politics had so long and often deprived fiction of a master.

Disraeli is renowned for his wit; but he is not so generally famed for two qualities in which he excelled, though with limitations—his subtle sense of humour and his fine feeling for the picturesque and romantic.

Like his own "Sidonia," Disraeli "said many things that were strange, yet they instantly appeared to be true;" like his own "Pinto," he "had the art of viewing common things in a fanciful light." I shall notice both these characteristics. He believed in the force of phrases as a pollen, so to speak, of ideas wafted through the air; and he believed in the perpetual miracles of existence. His favourite English authors were the romantics of Queen Elizabeth and the wits of Queen Anne and the Georges.

It was once said that wit is a point, but humour a straight line. This epigram is inadequate. Wit is no *résumé* of humour; the two qualities differ in kind. Wit is a department of style; and style is gesture, accent, expression. Wit is the faculty of combining the unlike, by the language of illustration, suggestion, and surprise. It sums up characters, things, and ideas. Like misery, "it yokes strange bedfellows," but with the link of words alone. It is best when intellectually true, but its requisite is *fancy*, and its domain expression. Humour, on the other hand, is an exercise of perceptive sympathy; it is the faculty of discerning the incongruous, especially of human nature, in the visible alone; it "looks on

this picture and on that ; " it is most excellent when ethically sound, but its essence is insight, and its sphere, situation.

No one ever heard of a witty picture, or a humorous epigram. We laugh at humour, whereas at wit we smile. Wit is, as it were, Yorick with cap and bells ; but humour unmasks him with a moral. Popular proverbs are the wit of the people ; what the crowd laughs at is its humour, and its humour varies in different countries ; but the standard of wit is the same in all civilisations. To define wit and humour would require both qualities, but, if I were to try my hand, I would venture to call wit, mirth turned philosopher—humour, philosophy at play.

Disraeli's wit is at root arabesque. Its filagree flourishes, like the ornaments of the Alhambra, are supported by solid if slender pillars. It is fanciful grace sustained by a poised strength ; but it is also tempered by the cheery, if sententious, cynicism of the eighteenth century, in which he had steeped himself from childhood. Its source was racial ; but its form and colour were much influenced by Pope, Swift, and Voltaire. He was " a master of sentences." He delighted to condense thought, as it were, in civilised proverbs, and at the same time to let his terse fancy ¹ embellish it with subtle and airy flourishes. His paradoxes are almost always thought in a nutshell, and never obscure nonsense in a clever frame. Of his directer wit, a good instance is to be found in his repartee to the crowd at his early Marylebone election : " On what do you stand ? " " *My head.*" Or his remark on the member who solemnly assured the House that he " took " his " stand " on " progress." " It occurred to me that progress was a somewhat slippery thing to take one's stand on." When the late Mr. Beresford Hope's rather turgid remark on the " golden image set up on the sands of Arabia " provoked Disraeli's famous phrase, its accompaniment was equally good. He said that there was " a certain prudery " about the honourable member's eloquence which never failed to fascinate.² The

¹ This quality is noticeable in his descriptions : Jerusalem at noon—" A city of stone in a land of iron with a sky of brass." Seville—" Figaro in every street, Rosina on every balcony." Cf. p. 304.

² It will be recalled that in opposing the Burials Bill, which he treated

great Catholic lady who received her guests "with extreme unction" reminds one of Horace Walpole.

Wit, of whatever class, is, roughly speaking, twofold in degree—lightning wit and wit lambent—the wit that strikes sharply, and the pleasantry that shines around its object. In the first Disraeli excelled. Like his own Monsignor, he "sparkles with anecdote and blazes with repartee." His pages bristle with good things; it is hard to choose. Every one remembers his political retorts and his literary aphorisms. "One whom I will not say that I respect, but rather that I regard." Another, "Who has learned much, but has still to learn that petulance is not sarcasm, nor insolence invective." The "conjurer who advances to the edge of the platform, and for hours draws yards of red tape from his mouth." One quotation against Peel—"Always ready with his Virgil"—that of the Horatian "Vectabor tunc humeris;" and "Is England to be governed by Popkins' plan?" "Batavian Grace," "Superior Person," and the like. Then there are the drunken recruits "full of spirit;" the hansom, the "gondola of London;" the critics, "the men who have failed;"¹ Tadpole's, "Tory men and Whig measures;" and Rigby's, "little words in great capitals"—these are household words. "Our young Queen, and our old institutions." There are Diplomats, "the Hebrews of politics;" St. James's Square, "the Faubourg St. Germain of London;" the "bad politician" of the 'thirties, who "like a bad shilling has worn off his edge by his very restlessness," and the enlightened Whig minister "almost eructating with the plenary inspiration of the spirit of the age;" the men of the 'seventies who "played with billiard-balls games that were not billiards," and the lady of the 'forties who "sacrificed even her lovers to her friends;" stolid bores, our "Social Polyphemi;" books, "the curse of the human race;" of Austria, "two things made her a nation, she

with respect, Disraeli, after expounding the parish rights in the churchyard, said, "I must confess that, were I a Dissenter contemplating burial, I should do so with feelings of the utmost satisfaction."

¹ Cf. *The Infernal Marriage*—"Are there any critics in Hell?" "Myriads," rejoined the ex-King of Lydia. There is a kindred remark in one of Landor's Dialogues.

was German and she was a Catholic, and now she is neither ;” of the Reform Bill, “It gave to Manchester a bishop and to Birmingham a dandy.” And, less familiar, there is “Lord Squib’s” definition of money value, “very dear ;” “Count Mirabel’s” pleasantry, “coffee and confidence ;” “Essper George’s,” “Like all great travellers, I have seen more than I remember, and remembered more than I have seen ;” Venus, the “goddess of watering-places,” and “Burlington” with “his old loves and new dances.” There is the advice in *The Young Duke*, too, that “good fortune with good management, no country house and no children, is Aladdin’s lamp,” and that in *Lothair* to “go into the country for the first note of the nightingale and return to town for the first muffin bell.” Then there is the “treatise on a subject in which everybody is interested, in a style no one understands ;” and there are the French actresses averring at supper, “No language makes you so thirsty as French ;” the English tradesmen who “console themselves for not getting their bills paid by inviting their customers to dinner ;” the Utilitarian, whose dogma was “Rules are general, feelings are general, and property should be general ;” and the definition of Liberty, “Do as others do, and never knock men down.” There is Monmouth’s “some woman has got hold of him and made him a Whig.” There is the great political lady “who liked handsome people, even handsome women ;” and there is the unfortunate third-rate statesman, “who committed suicide from a want of imagination.” Nor should I omit an unprinted *mot*. He defined a political “Deputation” as “a noun of multitude meaning many, but not signifying much.” He was wont also to distinguish between “lawyers” and “legislators.” A brace of very witty similes also claim a mention here—the comparison of the Parliament-built region of Harley Square to “a large family of plain children with Portland Place and Portman Square for their respectable parents ;” and that of the detached breakfast-tables at “Brentham,” to “a cluster of Greek or Italian Republics, instead of a great metropolitan table, like a central government, absorbing all the genius and resources of society. Further, in the same category are the many metaphorical allusions and descriptions

that ornament his speeches. The transference of the Bank currency crisis to the Neapolitan procession and miracle of St. Januarius, both from a common cause, "congealed circulation;" the picture of a maladroit reinforcement of opposition as the exploit of the Turkish Admiral, summoned by the Sultan and blessed by the muftis, to retrieve the war, who yet steered his imposing fleet right into the enemy's port; and the many illustrations from Cervantes, whose irony they share.

Then, again, there are those terse figurative fancies which belong to the family of those first mentioned. The "Midland Sea" for the Mediterranean; the "Western minster" for Westminster Abbey; the "dark sex" for man; the "free-trader in gossip" for the bad listener; the "confused explanations and explained confusions," "Stateswoman"¹ and "Anecdoteage," which, by-the-by, is a phrase of Isaac Disraeli derived by him in conversation from Rogers²—all these and their kindred remind us that he was the son of an author portrayed by him as sauntering on his garden terrace meditating some happy phrase.

Of the second—the wit of sustained sparkle rather than of sudden flashes—there are abundant examples. There is the passage in which "Lady Constance" in *Tancred* unconsciously ironises evolution in her criticism of a pamphlet, "The Revelations of Chaos." There is the lady's reasoning on the Gulf Stream theory, and "Lothair's" retort, "You believe in Gulf Stream to that extent—no skating." There is the pious regret that a boring authoress could not be married to the author of "The Letters of Junius" and "have done with it;" and the pious hope that the Whigs would disfranchise every town without a Peel statue. Then, again, there is "Herbert" in *Venetia*.

"I doubt whether a man at fifty is the same material being that he is at five-and-twenty."

"I wonder," said Lord Cadurcis, "if a creditor brought an action against you at fifty for goods sold and delivered at five-and-twenty, one could set up the want of identity as a plea in bar; it would be a consolation to elderly gentlemen."

¹ From Swift, however.

² See his "Literary Character; or, The History of Men of Genius."

And to go back to an even earlier date—

"What a pity, Miss Manvers, that the fashion has gone out of selling one's self to the devil! . . . *What a capital plan for younger brothers!* It is a kind of thing I have been trying to do all my life, and never could succeed in. I began at school with toasted cheese and a pitchfork."

Or take the report of the debate in the House of Lords, "imposing, particularly if we take a part in it"—

"Lord Exchamberlain thought the nation going on wrong, and he made a speech full of currency and constitution. Baron Deprivyseal seconded him with great effect, brief but bitter, satirical but sore. The Earl of Quarterday answered these, full of confidence in the nation and himself. When the debate was getting heavy, Lord Snap jumped up to give them something light. The Lords do not encourage wit, and so are obliged to put up with pertness. But Viscount Memoir was very statesmanlike, and spouted a sort of universal history. Then there was Lord Ego, who vindicated his character, when nobody knew he had one, and explained his motives, because his auditors could not understand his acts."

Or the comparison of the defeated Tories to the Saxons converted by Charlemagne—

" . . . When the Emperor appeared, instead of conquering, he converted them. How were they converted? In battalions; the old chronicler informs us they were converted in battalions, and baptised in platoons. It was utterly impossible to bring these individuals from a state of reprobation to one of grace with sufficient celerity."

In his speeches again there is the *locus classicus* of "the range of exhausted volcanoes"—"not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest." There are the wonderful political pictures of the "Calabrian Earthquake," the "ragged regiment that would not march through Coventry—that's flat;" "Melbourne with his Reform Ministry and Ducrow still professing to ride on three sullen jackasses at once, but sprawling in the sawdust of the arena;" of Peel as the profligate deserting his mistress and "sending down his valet to say, 'I will have no whining here,'" and a hundred others as good.¹ Perhaps "Gamaliel, with all

¹ One of the best is the invective against the collapse of Peel's "sliding

the broad 'phylacteries on his forehead,' who 'comes down to tell us that he is not as other men are,' in reference to the 'Cabal' of 1859, should also be included. This is the 'parliamentary wit' which Gladstone avowed unrivalled, and these, the vivid illustrations and metaphors, which he declared supreme in power of 'summing up characters and situations,' and fraught with the gift of 'appealing to the ear and the fancy.' "

But there is also one from *The Press* of 1853 which is unknown, and claims a memorial. He is referring to the "Coalition" Ministry of 1853—one, as he calls it, of "suspended opinions," and "resembling the ark into which creatures of the most opposite species walked two by two." It singles out a magnificent "over-educated mediocrity" among the strait sect of the "Peelites"—those who in Lady Clanricarde's epigram "were always putting themselves up to auction and buying themselves in again." It satirises that leader's protest that he was still a "Conservative," his announced "regret at the rupture of ancient ties," his "hope of some future reunion"—

"... Amiable regret! Honourable hope! reminding us of those inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, who never devour their enemies—that would be paying them too great a compliment. They eat up only their own friends and relations with an appetite proportioned to the love that they bear to them. And then they hasten to deck themselves in the feathers and trappings of those thus tenderly devoured in memorial of their regret at the 'rupture of ancient ties,' and their 'hope of some future reunion.' Do you feel quite safe with your new ally? Do you not dread that the same affectionate tooth will some day be fastened upon your own shoulders?"

scale:"—"... Of course the Whigs will be the chief mourners; they cannot but weep for their innocent, though it was an abortion. But ours was a fine child. Who can forget how its nurse dandled and fondled it? 'What a charming babe! Delicious little thing! So thriving! Did you ever see such a beauty for its years?' And then the nurse, in a fit of patriotic frenzy, dashes its brains out, and comes down to give master and mistress an account of this terrible murder. The nurse too, a person of a very orderly demeanour, not given to drink, and never showing any emotion, except of late when kicking against protection."

No wonder that Lord Granville—"un radical qui aime la bonne société"—described Disraeli as a "master" in the literary expression of "praise and blame."

Last, though not least, should be mentioned Pinto's dictum on English—

"It is an expressive language, but not difficult to master. Its range is limited. It consists, so far as I can observe, of four words, "nice," "jolly," "charming," and "bore;" and some grammarians add "fond."

But none knew better than Disraeli that wit unrelieved is metallic. He had a very real perception of the ludicrous, and it was usually of a cast bordering on irony. In boyhood, Disraeli had been a great admirer of Montaigne, one of those authors, as he acknowledged, who "give a spring to the mind;" but I cannot discern any influence of Montaigne's twinkling stillness on Disraeli's humour. The humour of Molière and of Sheridan, like that of Fielding, of Hogarth, and of Dickens, is direct and didactic, pointing to the follies and foibles of mankind. That, on the other hand, of Sterne, often of Thackeray, always of Heine, is indirect, inclined to be sentimental, and insinuating with all the machinery of playful surprise, the inconsistencies that enlist feeling or awaken thought. Swift's grim and creative humour, also, that "knocks off the tallest of heads" with a knotted bludgeon, wielded, however, by an imaginative fierceness, is of the same order; and Swift had been early studied, was constantly quoted, and often imitated by Disraeli. The former is the broadsword of Cœur de Lion; the latter, the scimitar of Saladin. It is of this latter species that Disraeli at his best must be reckoned. It stamps the whole of *Popanilla*, and much of *Ixion*, and *The Infernal Marriage*, and it interleaves both his wit, his argument, and his reflection throughout his novels, and, conspicuously in his triumph, *Coningsby*.

Take "Lord Monmouth's" indignant lesson to the hero: "You go with your family, sir, like a gentleman. *You are not to consider your opinions like a philosopher or a political adventurer;*" or the motive for his bequest of his bust to "Rigby," "that he might perhaps wish to present it to another friend;"

or the same amiable nobleman's reason for esteeming besides appreciating "Sidonia"—he was so rich that he could not be bought. "A person or a thing that you perhaps could not buy, became," in his eyes, "invested with a kind of halo amounting almost to sanctity." "Lord Monmouth," indeed, and "Rigby" are Disraeli's masterpieces in this vein; and "Mrs. Guy Flouncey," who, like "Becky," "was always sure of an ally the moment the gentlemen entered the drawing-room," follows at no very remote distance. Take "Waldershare's" account of England's ascendancy:—

"I must say it was a grand idea of our Kings making themselves sovereigns of the sea. *The greater portion of this planet is water, so we at once became a first-rate power.*"

Or the Homeric simplicity of the "Ansary" tribe, who believe London to be surrounded by sea, and inquire if the English dwell in ships, and are thus corrected by their would-be interpreter "Keferinis"—

"The English live in ships only during six months of the year—principally when they go to India—the rest entirely at their country houses."

Similarly, too, is the oblique sarcasm of "*Tancred's*" "Fakredeem"—

". . . We ought never to be surprised at anything that is done by the English, who are, after all, in a certain sense, savages. . . . Everything they require is imported from other countries. . . . I have been assured at Beiroot that they do not grow even their own cotton; but that I can hardly believe. *Even their religion is an exotic, and, as they are indebted for that to Syria, it is not surprising they should import their education from Greece.*"

So, too, the piteous plight of the two honest servants—"Freeman and Trueman"—who complain to their master, in sight of Sinai, that they "do miss the 'ome-brewed ale and the family prayers;" and the twice-raised wonder of the "Swells" as to what could drag one of their compeers to Palestine: "I believe Jeremiah somewhere mentions partridges." Nor should "St. Aldegonde's sigh"—"of a rebellious Titan"—at refusing to attend morning church at

Brentham be forgotten: "Sunday in London is bad, but Sunday in the country is infernal;" or his dainty wife's elaborate efforts that he should never be bored; or the handsome Duke's¹ daily thanksgiving as he completed his "consummate toilette" that he had a family "worthy of him."

"Rigby's" election, too—an excellent example—well illustrates the man to whom the country meant nothing in comparison with the constituency, and to whom his titled patron's choice of him as executor was a "sublime truth." The whole scene is one of sustained humour. I will only cite "Rigby's" "grand peroration."

"... He assured them that the eyes of the whole empire were on this particular election (cries of 'That's true!' on all sides), and England expected every man to do his duty. 'And who do you expect to do yours,' inquired a gentleman below, 'about that 'ere pension?' ..."

Then again, the episode of the Justice of the Peace in *Venetia*, and this from *Endymion*—

"The chairman opened the proceedings, but was coldly received, though he spoke sensibly and at some length. He then introduced a gentleman who was absolutely an alderman to move a resolution. . . . The august position of the speaker atoned for his halting rhetoric; and a city which had only just for the first time been invested with municipal privileges was hushed before a man who might in time even become a mayor."

So, too, once more; the description of "Armine's" experiences in the sponging-house, where the only literature was a Hebrew Bible. This is from *Henrietta Temple*. In *Vivian Grey*, his first novel, occurs the same whimsical humour that is to be found in his last, *Endymion*. The German statesman is pointing a *gourmet*-metaphysician, "stuffing 'kalte schale' in a corner."

"... The leaven of the idealists, a pupil of the celebrated Fichte. . . . The first principle of this school is to reject all expressions which incline in the slightest degree to substantiality. . . . Matter is his great enemy. My dear sir, observe

¹ The late Duke of Abercorn.

how exquisitely Nature revenges herself on these capricious and fantastic children. Methinks that the best answer to the idealism of M. Fichte is to see his pupil devouring *kalte schale*."

In *Lothair* few will forget the hero's musings after the opera attendant's "Thank you, my lord" had attested the "overpowering honorarium."

"'He knows me,' thought Lothair; but it was not so. When the British nation is at once grateful and enthusiastic, they always call you 'my lord.'" And in the same novel occurs the admirable humour of the scene at Muriel Towers, where the new French dance which is remembered and at last arranged by the impromptu good humour and cleverness of "Theodora," is muddled by "Lord Carisbrook," who sums up his knowledge by "Newest thing in Paris," yet, notwithstanding, grins afterwards, quite self-satisfied, with his "I am glad I remembered it."

There remains this light thrust at London architecture—

"Shall we find refuge in a committee of taste, escape from the mediocrity of one to the mediocrity of many? . . . One suggestion might be made. No profession in England has done its best until it has furnished its victim. The pure administration of justice dates from the deposition of Macclesfield. . . . Even our boasted navy never achieved a victory until we shot an admiral. *Suppose an architect were hanged!*"

And, finally, how admirable is the mock epic of the *chef's* dilemma at the opening of *Tancred*: "It is worthy of Boileau."

" . . . 'What you learned from me,' says Papa Prevost, 'came at least from a good school. It is something to have served under Napoleon,' he added, with the grand air of the imperial kitchen. 'Had it not been for Waterloo, I should have had the cross. *But the Bourbons and the Cooks of the Empire never could understand each other.* They brought over an emigrant *chef* who did not comprehend the taste of the age. He wished to bring everything back to the time of the "*œil-de-bœuf*." *When Monsieur passed my soup of Austerlitz untasted, I knew the old family was doomed.*' . . . 'We must muster all our forces,' says the great Leander. 'There is a

want not only of genius but of men in our art. The Cooks are like the civil engineers: since the middle class have taken to giving dinners, the demand exceeds the supply.' 'There is Andrien,' said Papa Prevost; 'you had some hopes of him.' 'He is too young. I took him to Hellingsley, and he lost his head on the third day. I entrusted the *soufflés* to him, and but for the most desperate personal exertions, all would have been lost. *It was an affair of the Bridge of Arcola.*' . . ." How Lilliput and Brobdingnag here combine! I prefer this epic-fantasy to the lyric-fantasy of Thackeray's "Mirobolant."

When Disraeli was out of office for the last term, he was walking with a leading member of the Government that had replaced his own. The statesman asked him how he thought the new Administration was getting on. "Pretty well," was his answer, "but I like the old-fashioned methods. The first year you do nothing; the second year you talk of doing something; the third year you do something—and succeed; the fourth you do something—and fail; the fifth year you spend in discussing whether it was a failure or not; the sixth, you go to the country, *who pronounce that it was.*"

Most of these are to some degree fanciful *persiflage*. Not so the following—a passage alluded to in a note already, and compared with another one from Heine. He is describing the Vintage Feast of Tabernacles, and the passage is the more remarkable because Disraeli's father instances this very festival as one of the obsolete and fanatical absurdities that unfit the Old Testament religion for its proper fulfilment by the New:—

"Picture to yourself the child of Israel in the dingy suburb or the stolid quarter of some bleak Northern town, where there is never a sun that can at any rate ripen grapes; yet he must celebrate the vintage of purple Palestine. . . . He rises in the morning, goes early to some Whitechapel market, purchases some willow boughs for which he has previously given a commission, and which are brought probably from one of the neighbouring rivers of Essex, hastens home, cleans out the yard of his miserable tenement, builds his bower, decks it even profusely with the

finest flowers and fruit he can procure, and hangs its roof with variegated lamps. After the service of his synagogue, he sups late with his wife and children, as if he were in the pleasant villages of Galilee beneath its sweet and starry sky. . . . Perhaps as he is offering up the peculiar thanksgiving, . . . and his wife and children are joining in a pious 'Hosanna'—that is, 'Save us'—a party of *Anglo-Saxons, very respectable men, ten-pounders, a little elevated, it may be, though certainly not in honour of the vintage, pass the house, and words like these are heard: 'I say, Buggins, what's that row?' 'Oh, it's those cursed Jews! We've a lot of them. It's one of their horrible feasts. The Lord Mayor ought to interfere. However, things are not so bad as they used to be. They used always to crucify little boys at their hullabaloes, but now they only eat sausages made of stinking pork.'* 'To be sure,' replies his companion, 'we all make progress.'"

And there are many pendants to this kind of pathetic humour in the sad vagaries, degraded ignorance, sordid joys and squalid sorrows of the operatives of "Wodgate" so sympathetically presented in *Sybil*:—

" . . . 'They call me Tummas, but I ayn't got no second name; but now I'm married I mean to take my wife's, for she has been baptised, and so has got two.' 'Yes, sir,' said the girl with the vacant face and the back like a grasshopper, 'I be a reg'lar born Christian, and my mother afore me, and that's what few gals in the yard can say. Thomas will take to it himself when work is slack; and he believes now in Our Lord and Saviour Pontius Pilate, who was crucified to save our sins, and in Moses, Goliath, and the rest of the apostles.' 'Ah, me!' thought Morley, 'and could not they spare one missionary from Tahiti for their fellow-countrymen at Wodgate?'"

I must turn to the romantic and the picturesque in Disraeli's fiction. It is a large subject, but it need not necessitate a long treatment.

The Brontës and Bulwer Lytton, in opposed spheres and with opposite material, are perhaps the only modern pure romantics in English fiction, before the romantic revival of

the last twenty years or so had set in. In the early nineteenth century Sir Walter Scott had headed another romantic revival. Miss Austen, however,—the miniaturist of realism—recalled fiction in her delicate manner to the beaten high-road of the eighteenth. Dickens, romantic by instinct, dwelt on the horrible and grotesque, and was more melodramatic than strictly romantic. Thackeray, sternly combating the infinite romance of his own nature, disclaimed a hero, and proved sentimental rather than romantic. Trollope, who photographed feeling, abominated romance. George Eliot set out as a romantic, but she soon became gloriously whelmed in the vortex of scientific psychology. Others, who lack her imagination, have since followed in her track. We have been treated to analytic presentations of life, where some five persons engage in a mutual war of motive, and the very reasons for turning a door-handle are minutely involved in character. On the one hand, we had the English and French sensationalists elaborately unravelling mysteries; on the other, the boudoir psychologists as elaborately anatomising moods. The great "naturalist" school supervened with its claims to scientise misery. Victor Hugo's romanticism was doomed by the merciless lancet of these literary surgeons. And throughout—even now, in the main, using "romance" more with regard to situation and expression than to events—the purely and simply heroic and adventurous has lost ground. Mind rather than action engrossed a great part of late nineteenth-century fiction.

With all faults, native and imposed, Disraeli proclaimed in his novels, in those which were political fairy-tales, as in those which were not, "adventures are to the adventurous;" and this very phrase, too, occurs in his earliest satire. *Contarini Fleming* was originally styled "The Psychological Romance;" *Alroy* is undoubtedly a romance historical; *The Young Duke*, a romance of fashion; *Vivian Grey*, one both of fashion and of ambition; *Venetia*, of biography; *Henrietta Temple*, of love; and the rest, romances of the world's actors and action.

But the extraordinary is merely the mantle of romanticism proper. Its method is everything. It is one that brings up

before us at once the thing seen and the man seeing. It releases individuality from stereotyped shackles, it transfers interest from achievement to achievement's atmosphere, and it lends to landscape-painting the same element that it lends to character-drawing.

The French separate their terms in distinguishing between real and feigned romance. The one they call *romantique*; the other, *romanesque*. The really romantic in fiction is so to write as to import into the interest of the extraordinary the interest also of the author's temperament. Both the unusual subject and the imparted atmosphere are requisites. *Rasselas* is an unusual subject sentimentiously treated. It is parable, not romance. The *Song of the Shirt* is an, alas! commonplace theme transfigured by sympathy. It is pathetic, not romantic. Sir Walter Scott, however, is romantic *par excellence*. We are sure that his background is unusual, and he stamps his individuality on the foreground. So, too, with his pictures of scenery. The writer's heart, rather than his head, pervades the perspective. The unromantic author is a showman, the romantic author an actor. The one fits character to persons; the other from persons evolves character. The romantic reveals the wonderful to us by personal feeling. Ruskin once defined the picturesque as "parasitical sublimity;" Carlyle, too (as romantic and picturesque himself as Ruskin), denounces the faculty in which he excelled. But these thinkers failed, perhaps, to grasp that the root of the most beautiful impressions is association interwoven with memory, fancy, affection, even superstition, and the symbols of very names. Strip Venice of her climate, rob man of his memory, and where is the Venice that Ruskin adored? Absolute beauty does exist, but rarely; and we atone for imperfections by supplementing it with the endearments of outward accident. It is Nature's own method; she garlands the rift of ruins with her greenery. The dead letter sleeps in literature as in life, of which literature ought to be the most sensitive mirror. Warmth is as indispensable as light; and if fiction is to remain an art and not sink into a false science, the dry bones of hard facts must be made to live. By these means, too, the personal influence of great writers is most practically preserved. The

wonderful in Nature can never be unnatural. It is only the affectation of it that is so—and that is usually accompanied by Mrs. Malaprop's "nice derangement of epitaphs."

Now, so far as Disraeli's characters merely typify—and they do often—causes or movements, they are not romantic, however picturesque their garb. But so far as they do not, they are essentially romantic, and, where politicians in council are not concerned, this is constantly the case.

Nothing can be more romantic, both in matter and manner, than the first introduction of "Sidonia." The "Princess Lucretia Colonna" in *Coningsby*, is romance incarnate. "Morley," again, in *Sybil* is a most romantic figure. The whole episode of the "Baronis," in *Tancred*, is genuinely and strikingly romantic. So is the figure of "Theodora" in *Lothair*; and all these occur in political novels. But in the non-political they abound. The early squibs are, perhaps, the only romantic skits in our language. *Vivian Grey*, too, is full of romance, and comprises the romantic drolleries of "Essper George," a modern Sancho. The whole of *Venetia* and all the action of *Contarini* are romantic; so is his only and halting drama, *Alarcos*. Though at times, and from causes which I shall consider, there is in these early novels something of old Drury, and too much occasionally of the "Ha!-and-Pah!" attitude, these are only blemishes in the costume; the figures remain romantic.

But it is, perhaps, in the short but charming descriptions of character and of scenery that Disraeli best showed his powers for the romantic and the picturesque. Take the character of "Fakredeen;" take even the character of Sir Robert Peel in the *Life of Lord George Bentinck*. Take a hundred touches from his *Home Letters*, and those to his sister and family. He there says that "description is a bore," but he contrived in a few strokes to picture without describing. The sunset at Athens, "like the neck of a dove." His vignettes of the Parthenon, of the Lagoons, of Jerusalem, of Syria, both here and in *Contarini*, *Tancred*, and *Lothair*, are etched by a master-hand.

Disraeli casts over his scenes the reflected glow of associative feeling. Peruse the beautiful rendering of "Marney

Abbey" in *Sybil* (too long to quote). It is essentially a placid scene romantically described, with an individual feeling of soft regret and tender awe communicated to the dreamy landscape. It proves his delight in what he called "the sweet order of country life;" his feeling for the "order of the peasantry . . . succeeded by a race of serfs who are called labourers and burn ricks."

If we would note the contrast in unromantic writers of genius, we have only to re-read Jane Austen's description of Northanger Abbey, where, be it marked, in purposely deriding the false romance of a girl's sickly fancy, she must have desired to depict the demesne with every impressive attribute.

And take this from *Tancred*: "Sometimes the land is cleared, and he finds himself by the homestead of a forest farm. . . . Still advancing the deer become rarer, and the road is formed by an avenue of chestnuts. . . . Persons are moving to and fro on the side-path of the road. Horsemen and carts seem returning from market; women with empty baskets, and then the rare vision of a stage-coach. The postillion spurs his horses, cracks his whip, and dashes at full gallop into the town of Montacute, the capital of the forest. . . . Nor does this green domain terminate till it touches the vast and purple moors that divide the kingdoms of Great Britain."

The effects of light play a leading part in Disraeli's landscapes.

" . . . Nor is there, indeed, a sight " (of Mont Blanc in *Contarini*) "more lovely than to watch at decline of day the last embrace of the sun lingering on the rosy glaciers. Soon, too soon, the great luminary dies; the warm peaks subside into purple, and then die into a ghostly white: but soon, and not too soon, the moon springs up from behind a mountain, flings over the lake a stream of light, and the sharp glaciers glitter like silver."

This, too, of night in Venice—

" . . . The music and the moon reign supreme. . . . Around on every side are palaces and temples rising from the waves which they shadow with their solemn form, their costly fronts

rich with the spoils of kingdoms and softened with the magic of the midnight beam. The whole city, too, is poured forth for festival. The people lounge on the quays and cluster on the bridges; the light barks skim along in crowds, just touching the surface of the water, while their bright prows of polished iron gleam in the moonshine and glitter in the rippling wave. Not a sound that is not graceful—the tinkle of guitars, the sighs of serenaders, and the responsive chorus of gondoliers. Now and then a laugh, light, joyous, and yet musical, bursts forth from some illuminated coffee-house, before which a buffo disports. . . .”

Here, again, is an English summer morning from *Sybil*—

“A bloom was spread over the morning sky; a soft golden light bathed with its fresh sheen the bosom of the valley, except where a delicate haze rather than a mist still partially lingered over the river, which yet occasionally gleamed and sparkled in the sunshine. A sort of shadowy lustre suffused the landscape, which, though distinct, was mitigated in all its features—the distant woods, the clumps of tall trees that rose about the old grey bridge, the cottage chimneys that sent their smoke into the blue, still air, amid their clustering orchards and gardens, flowers and herbs.”

There are many more such studies of light in home landscape, and not least in *Lothair*. And these are all renderings of scenery, and not scene-painting. In those abroad I might have included, too, the German Twilight from *Vivian Grey*, and the Grecian Sunset from *Contarini*, each dashed off with speed, yet each breathing a delicate and pensive peace.

Another feature of his pencil is its fondness for and studied conversance with the forms, and even the sounds, of trees. Their “various voices” are introduced with effect into the storm in *Vivian Grey*. As years went on, this love of trees grew stronger. It is expressly mentioned as the hobby of his old age by Lady John Manners. There is not one of his novels where the varieties of wood and forest are not handled with distinctness and affectionate observation. “Contarini’s” pet tree is oak. In *Endymion* is a park entirely of ilex. A glade at “Hurstley” is “bounded on each side with

masses of yew, their dark green forms now studded with crimson berries." "Nigel Penruddock," the Tractarian, lolls "on the turf amid the old beeches and the juniper;" and in the woods of a castle in *Vivian Grey*, "There was the elm with its rich branches bending down like clustering grapes; there was the wide-spreading oak with its roots fantastically gnarled; there was the ash with its smooth bark, and the silver beech, and the gracile birch, and the dark fir affording with its rough foliage a contrast to the trunks of its more beautiful companions, or shooting far above their branches with a spirit of freedom worthy of a rough child of the mountains." "Elegant" and "gracile" in this boyish sketch are Johnsonese, it is true; but its romantic faculty is evident. He delighted, too, in Elizabethan gardens and Italian parterres; and he has drawn, both in outward and inward outline, suggestive and romantic presentments of Oxford, Cambridge, and Eton.

And he could paint the marvellous to perfection. In *Alroy*, the magic ravine over which the hero must cross to win his talisman, rises before the view with the detail of reality: so does the ideal island of *Popanilla*. So—and they really belong to the marvellous—do the great country seats of "Montacute," "Hellingsley," "Beaumanoir," "Alhambra," "Château Désir," "Hainault," "Princewood," and "Muriel Towers." There are pictures, besides, of Seville, Cairo, and the Frankfort Fair. I could have subjoined the flaming castle in *Sybil*, the Derby in *Endymion*, the bull-fight in *Contarini*, the desert in *Alroy*, the mountain storm in *Vivian Grey*. But I prefer his tranquil pictures, and perhaps one of the best is the "Cherbury" in *Venetia*.

Another prominent characteristic of his romance was its fondness for London and the suburbs, the beauty of which, he always held, was only half appreciated. "Airy" Brompton and "merry" Kensington, with its young Queen "in a palace in a garden," touched his fancy; and the Georgian pleasaunces of Roehampton, the antiquer abodes of Sheen dedicated to Swift, Temple, and Stella, and the deer-haunted woodland of Richmond Park still breathing of Anne, and Ormonde, Pope, and Thomson, and Walpole; even, too, the Regency

villas of Wimbledon. A few romantic strokes in *Henrietta Temple* thus etch the Park of London:—

“At the end of a long sunny morning, . . . where can we see such beautiful women and gallant cavaliers, such fine horses and such brilliant equipages? The scene, too, is worthy of such agreeable accessories; the groves, the gleaming waters, and the triumphal arches. In the distance the misty heights of Surrey and the bowery glades of Kensington.” And readers of *Lothair* will remember with what romance he clothes an early June morning in Bond Street, and how, out of the prismatic hues of the fishmonger’s shop, he weaves a garland of gay fancies; nor will he forget St. James’s Street—that “celebrated eminence” in *Endymion*. But it was more serious London that he admired most. The foreign crannies of Soho and the dingy length of Marylebone have both been explored by him. The Strand and the City purlieus, however, were his favourites. The quaint sites, the busy romances of the now grimy riverside, the historic names, the contrast of outside flurry with inside repose, the dwelling-houses of a past age rich with its art but now reserved for musty parchments or massive ledgers, fascinated him. “It is at Charing Cross,” he avers, that “London becomes more interesting.” This is how he limns one of finance’s headquarters:—

“In a long, dark, narrow, crooked street, which is still called a lane, and which runs from the south side of the street of the Lombards towards the river, there is one of these old houses of a century past. . . . A pair of massy iron gates of elaborate workmanship separates the street from its spacious and airy courtyard, which is formed on either side by a wing of the mansion, itself a building of deep red brick, with a pediment and pilasters and copings of stone; in the middle of the plot there is a small garden plot inclosing a fountain, and a very fine plane tree. The stillness, doubly effective after the tumult just quitted, the lulling voice of the water, the soothing aspect of the quivering foliage, the noble building and the cool and spacious quadrangle—the aspect even of those who enter, and frequently enter, the precincts, and who are generally young men gliding in and out earnest and full

of thought—all contribute to give to this locality something of the classic repose of a college, instead of a place agitated with the most urgent interests of the current hour."

London's motley vastness, too, and magnetism of attraction were constantly his themes. "... It is a wonderful place, . . . this London; a nation, not a city; with a population greater than some kingdoms, and districts as different as if they were under different governments, and spoke different languages." And yet (of "Lothair"), "I have been living here six months, and my life has been passed in a park, two or three squares, and half a dozen streets!"

In *Vivian Grey* Disraeli whimsically observed that literature was declining in the 'twenties through a wealth grown so luxurious as to rank it with "ottomans, bonbons, and pier-glasses." "Consols at a hundred were the origin of all book societies. There is nothing like a fall in consols to bring the blood of our good people of England into good order."

Consols have now fallen, and maybe literature is reviving. Certain I am that, when its revival becomes pronounced, it will be through the invigoration of romance. The strange need not be sought in the remote. Wordsworth found it in "laughing daffodils," as truly as Byron in the Corsair. Unromantic matter, romantically treated, is more refreshing than romantic matter unquickened by personal feeling—by

"Quod latet arcana non enarrabile fibrâ."

I have mentioned Disraeli's early tendency towards "Ha!" and "Pah!" For this there were several reasons besides his own temper and that of the time.

When we speak of an "artificial" style we mean one unnatural to the author. Disraeli's style was perfectly natural to him, and it altered little. To impose another man's voice on our own is real artifice. How natively pathetic he could be, is shown by the scene in *Vivian Grey*, where the broken Cleveland sits and sobs amid the laughing children on his lonely bench in Kensington Gardens; and how simply pleasing, by the encounter after long years between "Coningsby" and "Lady Theresa." He constantly alternates between the homely and the outlandish.

In the few years preceding his grand tour, and, still more, the earlier *Vivian Grey*, he was at a phase in his development when he was only just beginning to realise the true bent of his powers, of which he had from the first been conscious, but which had hitherto more or less perplexed and bewildered him. In *Alroy* and *Contarini* his tone is one of savage force as yet unchastened and unmellowed. The wild Arab is in them. All the over-mastering dreams of his youth claimed materialisation; his language went before his feelings, and strove to outrun them by vehement strokes of attitude. He thirsted for action, and yet drooped, restless and mortified. His circumstances were at war with his consuming ambitions. It was the discord of a peculiar fate and an unique organisation; the ferment of a ripe spirit cooped by unripe experience, of an as yet untempered vigour. The genius, as in the old legend, shrank and dwindled in the bottle, but soared with gigantic stature when the stopper was released. One must not take the personal touches in *Vivian*, *Alroy*, and *Contarini* too literally. They are a blend of several factors and of various characters; and he himself in his age regretted that the last had been the task of immaturity. But from the main emphasis and the prevailing moods of the three together, thus much one may gather.

"Why, what is life" (this from *Alroy*), "for meditation mingles ever with my passion? . . . Throw accidents to the dogs, and tear off the painted mask of false society! Here am I, a hero; with a mind that can devise all things, and a heart of superhuman daring, with youth, with vigour, with a glorious lineage . . . and I am—nothing." He was morbidly overdone, and he brooded and overdid his own morbidity. He had lived in "a private world and a public world," and the two were still at variance. "I was," he says extravagantly of a still earlier date, on the lips of "Contarini," "in these days but a wild beast who thought himself a civilised human being;" and yet "I felt the conviction that literary creation was necessary to my existence."—"What vanity in all the empty bustle of common life! It brings to me no gratification; on the contrary, degrading annoyance. It develops all the lowering attributes of my nature." He was impatient, and yet he felt that "patience is a necessary

ingredient of genius." "Nothing is more fatal than to be seduced into composition by the first flutter of the imagination." He had aspired to be a poet, and a poet in a new style befitting modern life. The failure of the *Revolutionary Epick* disgusted him; yet how could he have expected it to succeed? even if it had been sold at a farthing, as in the case of Mr. Horne's experiment, it would never have attracted the public, for it was a long essay in stilted verse.¹ He still aspired to influence and rule his fellow-men, but no path was clear. These moods were not to last. "Think of me as of some exotic bird which for a moment lost its way in thy cold heaven, but has now regained its course and wings its flight to a more brilliant earth, and a brighter sky."

Moreover, he had for some years fostered the idea that verse was obsolete for poetry, and that rhyme was a solecism. Poetry should be the revelation of nature, and yet it had sought a modern vent in unnatural language.² He attempted, therefore, to frame a language for poetical expression on a plan of his own, at once rhythmical and theatrical. And for all his confidence he was not wholly at ease. "I observed that I was the slave of custom, and never viewed any particular incident in relation to men in general. . . . I deeply felt that there was a total want of nature in everything connected with me."—"When I look back on myself at this period, I have difficulty in conceiving a more unamiable character." And yet instinct revolted against artificiality. In defiance he would air his most extreme passions. To veil them was cant. "Never apologise for showing feeling. . . . Remember that when you do so, you apologise for truth."

But if something of all this is applicable to 1829, still more is applicable to three years earlier, when *Vivian Grey*

¹ Of his verse I have not treated. No reader, however, of his fine sonnet on the Duke of Wellington, inscribed in the Stowe album, or of the wistful lyric addressed from the Ægean to his family in the *Home Letters*, or of the "Bignetta" rondel in the *Young Duke*, with its Heinesque close, or even of "Spring in the Apennines" from *Venetia*, can doubt his genuine gift for poetry and metre.

² "The art of poetry was to express natural feelings in unnatural language."—*Contarini*.

—a miracle, whatever its defects, for one barely out of his nonage—was published;¹ and much of the phase was only a remnant of its aggravated form in 1826. He had been seriously and mysteriously ill. He had small acquaintance with the great world, and continual conversance with his visions of it. He was in doubt, even in despair. His family was astonished, even annoyed. In *Contarini*, where his first novel figures as “Manstein,” he has himself told us what he regretted in *Vivian Grey*. It was “written in a storm and without any reflection;” its few images were all “probably copied from books.”—“I thought of ‘Manstein’ as of a picture painted by a madman in the dark.”—“I determined to re-educate myself.” Years afterwards, when these fleeting phases had long passed, and had been succeeded by the higher and healthier moods following on the discovery and pursuit of his true destiny, he apologised for *Vivian Grey* as a boyish freak, affected because not written from observation of the world, and he added that every one has a right to be conceited until he is successful. He showed his opinion of it by publishing *Contarini* anonymously. In his old age, he excused its “inevitable reappearance” by once remarking that first efforts dealing with a big but unknown world must be exaggerated in style, and that “false taste accompanies exaggeration.” Had he been grandiose without afterwards proving himself great, the blame would have been deserved.

These are not the blemishes of his great political novels; but there is in them also, with all their deep thought and striking insight, their absolute originality and stimulating suggestiveness, an air at times of the perfumer’s shop rather than of the fresh air. Even “Sybil” cries out, “Oh! the saints, ’tis a merry morn!” “Coningsby” meets his lady-love at a ball, which “is a dispensation of almost supernatural ecstasy;” and in *Lothair* itself we revert to “barbs” and “jennets.” I think that these later defects were partly due to the reaction against the constraint, repression, and

¹ In five volumes. Its original dedication ran:—

“To the Best and Greatest of Men.

He for whom it is intended will accept and appreciate the compliment,
Those for whom it is not intended will do the same.”

formality compelled by his political career. They were a reaction in form, but in no case were they artificial in substance. They meant something, and they pressed it home. Disraeli was always a fantastic, and the fantastic holds high rank in literature. It distinguishes Disraeli's pet, Cervantes. But fantasy is different far from frippery. Fantasy is the flicker of firelight, not the flare of gas.

Again, it is always hard for originality to win a first hearing from the public. Browning once remarked in a letter that to fasten the attention of the British public some stroke of style is required. This is true. Browning is himself an example; Carlyle, another; for his early essays completely lack that compound of Jean Paul's German, and old Mrs. Carlyle's Scotch, out of which Carlylese was evolved. Ruskin is another instance. Disraeli in his correspondence is far more free and flowing than in his books. Of those books there is least trace of apparent affectation in *Coningsby*, which is the best political novel in any language. Reviewed as a whole, his novels are creative, and a marvellous medium for thought. Some bedizenment there is doubtless, and there are many gauds of fancy; and parts of the characterisation may be said to be written in italics. It is true also that some of the persons are waxworks, but none of the characters are, and his movement of ideas, as well as his ideas of movement, display a flexibility rarely joined to such piercing penetration. Next to his three great political novels and in some respects above them, I would rank *Venetia*, which has never met with such widespread appreciation. *Alroy* and *Contarini* are psychological romances, exceptional of their kind. His method of composition was the same throughout his life. He pondered in the night what he penned in the morning. And of his early preparation he has left a memorial—

“ . . . I prepared myself for composition in a very different mood from that in which I had poured forth my fervid crudities in the Garden-house. Calm and collected, I constructed characters on philosophical principles, and mused over a chain of action which should develop the system of our existence. All was art. I studied contrasts and grouping, and metaphysical analysis was substituted for anatomical delineation. I was not satisfied that the conduct of my

creatures should be influenced merely by the general principles of their being ; I resolved that they should be the very impersonations of the moods and passions of our mind. *One was ill-regulated will ;*¹ *another offered the formation of a moral being ;*² materialism sparkled in the wild gaiety and reckless caprice of one voluptuous girl, while spirit was vindicated in the deep devotion of a constant and enthusiastic heroine.³ Even the lighter temperaments were not forgotten. Frivolity smiled and shrugged her shoulders before us, and there was even a deep personification of cynic humour."

He believed in the influence of the creative arts on creative authorship. He has pointed out how the Tuscan school of painting trains to the grandeur of simplicity, the Venetian to the gorgeousness of fancy. And of music he has written : "The greatest advantage that a writer can derive from it is that it teaches most exquisitely the art of development. It is in remarking the varying recurrence of a great composer to the same theme, that a poet may learn how to dwell upon the phases of a passion,—how to exhibit a mood of mind under all its alterations, and gradually to pour forth the full tide of feeling." But he thought that such influences were a prelude to creation, not to execution. "It is well to meditate upon a subject under the influence of music, but to execute we should be alone, and supported only by our essential and internal strength."

As is familiar, he was fastidious even when he was florid. It is well known that he relieved his last illness by correcting the proofs of his last speeches for Hansard—"the Dunciad of Politics." "I will not," he said, "descend to history speaking bad grammar."

About national literature he held views which sprang from his theories of race. He considered that modern Europe depended overmuch on ideas derived from Rome, Greece, and Palestine. "At the revival of letters we beheld the portentous spectacle of national poets communicating their inventions in an exotic form. . . . They sought variety in increased artifice of diction, and substituted the barbaric clash of rhyme for the melody of the lyre. . . ." Spain, he thought, offered the best field for a national novel.

¹ *Vivian Grey.*² *Contarini Fleming.*³ *Venetia.*

"The outdoor life of the natives induces a variety of the most picturesque manners, while their semi-civilisation makes each district retain with barbarous jealousy its peculiar customs."

For the critics he had a smile at the first as at the last. They "admired what had been written in haste and without premeditation, and generally disapproved of what had cost me much forethought and been executed with great care. . . . My perpetual efforts at being imaginative were highly reprobated. . . . I puzzled them, and no one offered a prediction as to my future career. . . . I thought no more of criticism. The breath of man has never influenced me much, for I depend more upon myself than upon others. . . ."

At "Reisenburg" in *Vivian Grey* were two great journals edited on opposite principles. In the one, every review was written by a personal enemy; in the other by a personal friend. And there was a third by that "literary comet," "Von Chronicle," the historical novelist, who believed that in romance costume was superior to character. His novel of "Rienzi" terminated with the scene of the Coronation, because "after that, what is there in the career of Rienzi which would afford matter . . . ? All that afterwards occurs is a mere contest of passions and a development of character; but where is a procession, or a triumph, or a marriage . . . ? Not a single name is given in the work for which he has not contemporary authority; but what he is particularly proud of are his oaths. Nothing has cost him more trouble than the management of the swearing; and the Romans, you know, are a most profane nation. . . . The 'sblood' of the sixteenth century must not be confounded with the 'zounds' of the seventeenth. . . . The most amusing thing is to contrast this mode of writing works of fiction with the prevalent and fashionable mode of writing works of history. . . . Here we write novels like history and history like novels. All our facts are fancy, and all our imagination reality."

Excellent fooling, this! Through the long range of his writings Disraeli did more than any novelist of the nineteenth century to impress on the ordinary mind not only the pleasures but the powers of the Imagination.

CHAPTER X

CAREER

THE secrets of success, Disraeli has told us more than once, are knowledge of your capacities, constancy of purpose, and mastery of your subject. It is seldom that in one brain these qualities of grip, mental and moral, are fully combined ; and, rarer still, when they do reside together, is the addition of the third requisite named by him—patience. It, with the tact it bears, is as necessary for the servant as the master.

“The magic of the character,” he says of the courier in *Contarini*, “was his patience. This made him quicker and readier and more successful than all other men. He prepared everything, and anticipated wants of which we could not think.”

The preparation for career—apart from its entitling endowments—should be education ; but education, he held, even in its prescientific days, often started with a vital mistake. It proceeded on words, grammars, and systems. It should proceed on a knowledge of pre-disposition ; others should know a man before he is called upon to know himself. “What we want is to discover the character of a man at his birth, and *found his education upon his nature*. . . . All is an affair of organisation. . . . Among men there are some points of similarity and sympathy. There are few alike ; there are some totally unlike the mass. . . . Until we know more of ourselves, of what use are our systems ? . . . We speculate upon the character of man ; we divide and we subdivide. We have our generals, our sages, our statesmen. There is not a modification of mind that is not mapped out in our great atlas of intelligence. We cannot be wrong, because we have mapped out the past ; and we are famous for discovering

the future when it has taken place. Napoleon is First Consul, and would found a dynasty. . . . But what use is the discovery, when the Consul is already tearing off his republican robe and snatching the imperial diadem? And suppose, which has happened, and may and will happen again—suppose a being of a different organisation from Napoleon or Cromwell placed in the same situation—a being gifted with a combination of intelligence hitherto unknown—where, then, is our moral philosophy? How are we to speculate upon results which are to be produced by unknown causes? . . . The whole system of moral philosophy is a delusion, fit only for the play of sophists in an age of physiological ignorance." So, too, he had reason to think of some physicians "who decide by precedents which have no resemblance, and never busy themselves about the idiosyncrasies of their patients."¹ "Until," he wrote again, "men are educated with reference to their nature, there will be no end of domestic fracas." He remembered his grandfather's misconstruction of his father's temperament, and his uncle's of his own. Even illness he considered "as much a part of necessary education as travel or study." And his constant idea, that national literature ought to be native and not imported, allied itself to his educational ideas also. "The duty of education is to give ideas. When our limited intelligence was confined to the literature of two dead languages, it was necessary to acquire them." . . . But now each nation has its literature. . . . Let education, then, be confined to the national literature, and we should soon perceive the beneficial effects upon the mind of the student. Study would then be a profitable delight. I pity the poor Gothic victim of the grammar and the lexicon. The Greeks, who were masters of composition, were ignorant of all languages but their own. They concentrated the genius of the study of expression upon one tongue. *To this they owe that blended simplicity and strength of style, which the imitative Romans, with all their splendour, never attained. . . . The ancients invented their Governments according to their wants; the moderns have adopted foreign policies, and then modelled*

¹ Cf. Bolingbroke's "Compare the situations without comparing the characters."

their conduct upon this borrowed regulation. This circumstance has occasioned our manners and customs to be so confused, absurd, and unphilosophical. What business had we, for instance, to adopt the Roman law—a law foreign to our manners, and consequently disadvantageous? He who profoundly meditates upon the situation of modern Europe will also discover how productive of misery has been the senseless adoption of Oriental customs by Northern peoples. Whence came that divine right of kings which has deluged so many countries with blood?—that pastoral and Syrian law of tithes, which may yet shake the foundations of so many ancient institutions?” The spirit of this passage was ever present to his mind. He went even further. He has asserted that the mere fact of copying or assuming ideas deprives them of their native virtue, and that all that is second-hand loses the vigour and flavour of its originals in imitating them.

Preparation must be succeeded, and, indeed, attended, by meditation. I shall return to this idea shortly, and consider it in his own instance. But there comes a juncture when action must rise from the chrysalis of thought which encloses it.

“ . . . You must renounce meditation. Action is now your part. Meditation is culture. It is well to think until a man has discovered his genius and developed his faculties, but then let him put his intelligence in motion. Act, act, act without ceasing, and you will no longer talk of the vanity of life.”

The perpetual thought of death he considered harmful. To live in present duty and energy was truer piety than to brood on the coming hour when no man can work ; and the very sense of existence is a great happiness, and leads to hope. “. . . If, in striking the balance of sensation, misery were found to predominate, no human being would endure the curse of existence. . . .”¹ He would surely have echoed that fine saying of Gladstone—“Indifference to the world is not love of God.” He was infinitely sanguine in outlook, although extremely cautious in expedients. I may recall that when *Coningsby* has missed his fortune, *Sidonia* consoles him by a series of more disagreeable contingencies.

Such, then, were for him the equipments of career. Of its

¹ This idea was emphasised by Bolingbroke.

arts in attaining what it designs to exercise for the good of others, much will have been gleaned from many citations as to tact and temper. There is one other maxim of worldly wisdom which is worth recording: "If you wish a man to be your friend, allow him to confute you." His idea of power was that it was "a divine trust," but it was also a cumulative fund. "The very exercise of power only teaches me that it may be wielded for a greater purpose." Mrs. Disraeli said, when her husband had, in his own words, "climbed to the top of the greasy pole at last," "You don't know my Dizzy, what great plans he has long matured for the good and greatness of England. But they have made him wait and drudge so long—and now time is against him."

It is not here my province to track the details of his own career. This book deals with his ideas. But with the interesting psychology of his early temperament I mean to deal, for it concerns his ideas.

I might, had his career been within my scope, have cleared some doubts, and explained many misunderstandings. I could have shown, as I have shown elsewhere, the real truth about the Peel letter, and the events of 1851-52. I should have pointed out the dividing lines in his campaign and the halting-places in his march, the Eastern tour, his marriage, his estrangement from Peel, the Crimean War, his steady progress in social improvements, his Reform Bills of 1859 and 1867, the strong effect on his outlook of events of magnitude, and the last act of the drama—his imperialism. I might also have explained the moot points connected with the years 1833, 1835, 1837, 1846, 1851, and 1860.¹ I might, perhaps, have been able to shed light on the delayed Malmesbury despatches in 1859. Nor should I have shirked his mistakes, notably the motion of censure on Lord Palmerston. And I would have dwelt on the striking influences which his sister and his wife exercised over him.

But one brief topic I shall skim before I finally trace something of his own peculiar development.

¹ Hume's election support, the challenge of O'Connell, the cultivation of Chandos, the "Canning" episode, the surrender of "protection," and the delay in producing the Indian despatches, respectively.

Much has been talked of his alien "aloofness." As for alien, Mazarin was in this sense an "alien," not to speak of the less worthy examples, Alberoni and Ripperda. In the eighteenth century a Scotch premier was in England an "alien." Augustus was partly, Napoleon wholly, an "alien." And what but "aliens" were Manin, Gambetta, Lasker, Midhat, and Emin? Nobody understood his countrymen more shrewdly at once and sympathetically than Disraeli. His was no sham patriotism, and he loved John Bull fondly, even when he poked fun at him. Nor had any pondered more deeply the lessons which history imparts. There are, however, two grains of truth in this reproach. He did regard the world and its history as a fleeting show. He believed in recurring cycles. What is now old was once new; what is new will one day be old. So long as individuals worked their best, what did it matter? One civilisation succeeds another, and the last state of a mighty nation is often worse than the first. "The whirligig of Time brings about his revenges." In this sense—the historical and philosophical sense—he might be called indifferentist. And again, he understood England, but it took long for his countrymen to understand *him*. When they came to do so, he met with that generosity which immense bravery and perseverance always eventually receive; but, meanwhile, he had struggled against a jealous malice which is, perhaps, peculiar to politics. He had "educated" his followers, but suspicion and misunderstanding hampered his every step. During two spans of some six years each (without counting his early period) he had to play the losing game with an unruffled brow, an encouraging smile, and an unwearied resource, which included the transformation of a party and foundation of a political magazine. He had to hearten the despairing, the recalcitrant, the slothful, and the sullen. He had to deplore the stupidity of missed opportunities;¹ he had to humour the engrossers of office; and, even, in the intervals of power, to bend his neck to the grindstone of finance. "I am not," he once sarcastically rejoined, alluding to Sir Charles Wood opposite, "a born Chancellor of the Exchequer." His hour struck. At sixty-four he

¹ Notably in 1855.

began to govern England on lines planned and with projects pondered full thirty years earlier; and even then he had to confront anonymous endeavours to sap his leadership from quarters which should have disarmed suspicion. His own mind was impartial in the extreme. The same "aloofness" which he is alleged to have displayed to British affairs, he certainly displayed in his books with regard to Eastern emirs, who talk with the aspirations of the West. "Alroy" himself is very European, and never more so than when he disdains the isolating fanaticism of "Jabaster."

Much, too, has been prattled about his "audacity," and I notice that the hackneyed quotation about "L'audace" is usually in these diatribes ascribed to Danton, and not to its author, Beaumarchais. Many of these "audacities" are now recognised as wisdom; but it has been after-wisdom that has recognised it; though Disraeli was usually Prometheus.

"There are times," he said in one of his early novels, "when I am influenced by a species of what I may term happy audacity, for it is a mixture of recklessness and self-confidence, which has a very felicitous effect upon the animal spirits. At these moments I never calculate consequences, yet everything seems to go right. I feel in good fortune; the ludicrous side of everything occurs to me; I think of nothing but grotesque images. I astonish people by bursting into laughter apparently without a cause. . . ."

Disraeli was naturally sensitive, but he studied self-repression. No one was more cut to the quick by contumely or impertinence; no one was more determined to hide the wound. "If," once observed Jowett, "Dizzy were on the brink of the bottomless pit, and each moment about to fall into it, his look would never betray the fact; such is his pluck and power of countenance." As he bore himself towards provocation, he bore himself towards pain. The last great speech he ever made was delivered with youthful jauntiness, yet he was forced to take a drug in order to deliver it. "One must meet death boldly," he exclaimed to an intimate friend, after he had read the denial of the doctors' assurance in their faces.

Disraeli's intellectual shortcomings are those, it seems to

me, belonging to an intense, as opposed to a diffused imagination. His mind shed both heat and light, but both the light and the heat were over-concentrated. The same applies, perhaps, to his will, and to his character also. Everything in him was focussed. His ideas possessed him, and he chafed, like a sculptor at work, to embody them. Outside the forms of those ideas he could not penetrate. In relation to them, he judged all junctures and all endeavours. It is this averseness to the abstract that pervades his every outlook. He could not conceive of ideas as unmaterialised or disembodied. They had been the companions of his boyish solitude.

"... The clustering of their beauty seemed an evidence of poetic power: the management of these bright guests was an art of which I was ignorant. I received them all, and found myself often writing only that they might be accommodated."

As a child, his ruling mood was that of reverie. He had steeped himself in his father's library, and his extraordinary imagination played upon the poets, the philosophers, and, above all, the historians. Dim dreams from the vast procession of the centuries took shape and became flesh. He beheld the great men and movements marching before him. Incarnate presences peopled his loneliness, and called to him with their voices—

"The votary of a false idea, I linger in this shadowy life and feed on silent images which no eye but mine can gaze upon, till at length they are invested with the terrible circumstances of life, and breathe, and act, and form a stirring world of fate, beauty, time, death, and glory. And then, from out this dazzling wilderness of deeds, I wander forth and wake . . . horrible! horrible!" "Often in reverie had I been an Alberoni, a Ripperda, a Richelieu. . . ." "I sat in moody silence, revolving in reverie without the labour of thought. . . ."

He felt that he was not as others. He found that though at once proud and gentle, as a boy, his family were sometimes eyed askance as foreigners. He wished to frequent a public school; it was deemed inadvisable. The harder side of his nature began to assert itself. He would triumph over all, hew down every obstacle. His father suggested the University. He rejected the offer. Why waste his time in words

that might prove a school for deeds? "A miserable lot is mine to feel everything and be nothing." He was destined, appointed, reserved. As he grew older these convictions deepened. "Am I a man, and a man of strong passions and deep thoughts? And shall I, like a vile beggar, upon my knees crave the rich heritage that is my own by right?" But how? The very thought bewildered, oppressed, and embittered him. "Everything is mysterious, though I have always been taught the reverse." In a dangerous moment he began to lay it down as a principle "that all considerations must yield to the gratification of my ambition." Life without power, and power that he felt deserved, was intolerable. His father remonstrated. He warned him against the fatal tyranny of the imagination. "I think," he said, "you have talents indeed for anything . . . that a rational being can desire to attain; but you sadly lack judgment." The boy replied, "I wish, sir, to influence men. . . . I am impressed with a most earnest and determined resolution to become a practical man. You must not judge of me by my boyish career. The very feelings that made me revolt at the discipline of schools will insure my subordination in the world. I took no interest in their petty pursuits, and their minute legislation interfered with my extended views." In answer, he was admonished that a nature so "headstrong and imprudent" would lead to situations ridiculous and even dangerous; that his lack of regulated balance would warp his excellent instincts. The boy persisted that, if not by deeds yet by words, he would sway his fellows. "Mix in society," rejoined his father, with a shrug of the shoulders, "and I will answer that you lose your poetic feeling; for in you, as in the great majority, it is not a creative faculty, originating in a peculiar organisation, but simply the consequence of a nervous susceptibility that is common to all." The youth continued to fret, and brood, and calculate. He felt method within him as well as frenzy. In his old age he was once driving past Bradenham with a lady who knew how happy his home relations had been. "Ah!" he sighed, "there is where I passed my miserable youth."—"Miserable!" she replied; "impossible! Surely you were happy there."—"Not then. I was devoured

by an irresistible ambition which I could not gratify.”¹ It reminds me of that passage in Swift where the great dean ascribes the first pricks of ambition, in the career which the inequalities of his situation had urged, to the rage and mortification he experienced as a boy in failing to land a big fish. He grew distracted; for a time he had to inhabit a darkened room. With the Austins he travelled in Germany and Italy. The result was *Vivian Grey*—the “Don Juan” of politics.

The circumstances and results of the book I have touched in the preceding chapter. Disraeli grew ashamed of its fashionable success. The world was not merely his oyster. He would elevate and benefit by it. He mixed in society, but it neither raised his spirits nor slaked his thirst, although it did help him to see his measure and stature among mankind. That commerce with the world is the best cure for misjudged ambition he pressed in his fine address to youth at the Manchester Athenæum; but ambition itself he regarded as elevating for man. At the crisis, however, that we have reached, his ambitions were still unsettled. He began to be soured and sceptical both of himself, of mankind, and of God. His spiritual fibre was shaken. His sister, with talents nearly equal to his, and faith and charity superior, came to his rescue. She healed his wounds; she ennobled his standard; she comforted him with her entire belief in his great future. She restored him to his higher self.

Once more the shadow of ill health fell across the young Disraeli's footsteps; this time a very critical malady—a complete nervous breakdown. He “fainted as he dressed.” He even had convulsions. He was overwhelmed by strange noises in his head. “. . . The falls of Niagara could not overpower the infernal roaring that I alone heard.”² Travel was prescribed. He departed for two years from Europe, and mended.

¹ This is told in one of Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff's “Diaries.”

² It is noticeable, as regards the habitual recurrence of his phrases, that in his early letters he always nicknames this first illness “the enemy,” the same as he used to his physicians in his last. His early ill health quickened his continual sympathy with suffering. No better instance could be read than his speech at the opening of the Hospital for Consumption, with his beautiful references to Jenny Lind, as song ministering to sorrow.

Even at this time, with the spectres of doubt and illness athwart his way, he could not stifle the secret assurance of his destiny. I have seen a letter to a friend, who had shared a financial misadventure, in which he deploras his condition, but declares that "something within me whispers that one day I shall be famous. Be assured, if ever that time comes, you will be the first that I shall remember."

He returned, found his place, his mission, and his ideals. But still his discreet family opposed themselves to his entrance into public life. It was incredible, impossible, absurd. "So much for the maddest of mad acts, as my uncle said," he wrote to his sister on his first return to Parliament.

Every one remembers the story of his meeting with Lord Melbourne, and his answer, true or not, as to what the premier could "do for him." "I wish to be Prime Minister." At any rate, Mrs. Austin, in extreme old age, recalled a party at her house about this period, when the young Disraeli explained his plans for England, "when I am Prime Minister," amid laughter and surprise. "You will see," he said, bringing his fist down on the mantelpiece, "I *shall* be Prime Minister." He felt, as he wrote to his sister after attending a great debate, that "he could floor them all." His confidence in himself, like his sister's in him, was colossal.

So I read his earliest years from his earliest books. Thenceforward he marched from strength to strength, and he employed power when he obtained it conscientiously according to his best lights for the improvement of the people and the glory of the Empire.

And yet how strange it is, that at the annual gatherings on his death-day, celebrated by the romance of his memory and his flower, the successors who, faltering from his footsteps, honour the good will of his enduring popularity, have never breathed his name! I can see him smile in the shades; for he found his party a quagmire, and he left it a township. At all times he toiled hard and long, though sometimes by fits and starts; and a study was reserved ready for his visits at Bradenham. Although in his later years he would sometimes play at indolence, it was really against the grain. The occasional air of listlessness which society remarked in his latter

days was the attendant of failing health, and only filmed an activity that neither age nor illness could overcome. In the long recess of 1848 he was working over ten hours a day, rising at five and retiring at nine. In the long session of 1852 he was working considerably more. To the last he read the classics while he dined. As he lay dying he corrected his speeches. He never relaxed that infinite interest in everything and everybody of purport and meaning, which the French well style "*la grande curiosité*."

When he died, amid national mourning, the late Lord Salisbury, after singling out his unquenchable zeal for the glory of Britain, lasting to a period when "the gratification of every possible desire negated the presumption of any inferior motive," adverted to his "patience, his gentleness, his unswerving and unselfish loyalty to his colleagues and fellow-labourers." Indisputably his moral character was high. Without question he, like Gladstone, raised the tone of parliamentary life from that of the days when politics were merely a squabble for place and a toss-up as to "whether England should be ruled by Tory nobles or by Whig." His tone may not always have chimed with certain forms or formulas of earnestness, but he acted up to his own high standard. "It was impossible," said the late Lord Granville, "to deny that Lord Beaconsfield had played a great part in British History. No one could deny his rare and splendid gifts and his force of character." Character will always appeal to England. "But," pursued the orator, after noticing his tolerance and forbearance, "he undoubtedly possessed the power of appealing to the imagination, not only of his countrymen, but of foreigners,¹ and that power is not destroyed by death."

My book opened with Personality, Ideas, and Imagination. With Imagination, Ideas, and Personality it shall close. They can turn and change the semblances of material "facts," for they abide behind the veil of time and of existence.

¹ At Berlin Bismarck said of him, "*Disraeli is England*." His translated works were, and I believe are, read widely abroad.

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